

January 25, 2009

Really Share

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Please turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 15. I'll read verses 1-4.

(1) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Three weeks ago, we talked about taking the land. Taking the land is a broad term. It means to expand God's kingdom through introducing unbelievers to Christ. It means to disciple believers to spiritual maturity. It means to experience all the abundance that God has for us. Abundance includes peace, contentment, and fulfillment. It includes abiding in God's presence, and possessing God's promises. To take the land is to help people to accept Christ and then become Christ-like.

We discussed five things to do to take the land. To take the land, we must: really pray, really care, really commit, regularly invite, and regularly share the gospel message.

Two weeks ago, we talked about taking the land. To take the land, we must lead the sheep, convert the goats, and stop the wolves. The sheep are those who believe in Jesus. To take the land, we must lead believers to spiritual maturity. The goats are people who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior. To take the land, we must convert unbelievers to a relationship with Christ. The wolves are those who attack others with their words and actions. To take the land, we must stop the wolves.

Last week, we talked about taking the land by fulfilling The Great Commission. A commission is a command. When Jesus told us to make and baptize disciples, he wasn't stating something for us merely to consider. When he instructed us to teach others to observe his commands, it was not just an option for Christian living. Jesus' words are The Great Commission not the great suggestion. Do we live out Jesus' words as a commission...or a suggestion?

To take the land, we must see the Great Commission as a command. To take the land, we must fulfill our commission. To take the land, we must consider our command to share the gos-

pel to be one of the most important things we do. To take the land, the significance of the commission must move us to action.

Next slide. Today, we'll continue and complete this "Take the Land" series. God wants us to go outside these walls to take the land. He wants unbelievers to accept his Son and become part of his family. He wants believers to become Christ-like and experience the abundant life he has for us. God wants his kingdom to expand. God wants people to leave the land of unbelief to become part of his family in the kingdom of heaven.

We are God's hands and feet. If we don't go to unbelievers, who will go? We are his voice. If we don't proclaim the good news, who will proclaim? We are the people God wants to use to expand his kingdom. If we don't expand God's kingdom, who will? Together, let's commit to take the land for the salvation of people and the glory of God.

In the verses we read a few minutes ago, Paul addressed the Christians who lived in Corinth. Paul's message was a reminder of the time he had spent with them. Paul had preached the gospel to them, resulting in their conversion to Christianity.

Nest slide. The word "Gospel" means the "glad announcement," or the "good news" about the coming of the Messiah, his life, sufferings, death, and especially his resurrection.

Verses 3 and 4 are a synopsis of the gospel message. The glad announcement, the good news is that Jesus died for sins, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead. That is the gospel message in an eternally important sound bite. We must really share this good news.

In verse 1, it is evident that the Corinthians had received the good news of the gospel. In addition, they stood on the truth of the gospel. They didn't run from the truth they heard from Paul. The gospel was good news that they received and held onto.

Next slide. Today, people need to receive the gospel. Once received, people need to stand on the gospel's truth and not run back to worldly beliefs. Tragically, it's possible to hear the good news of the gospel and never take a stand on its truth. I pray this statement doesn't characterize you.

In verse 2, we see that it's possible to hear about Jesus and believe in vain. I can tell you about Jesus, and you can reject the message without holding fast to my words. You can believe about Jesus without putting your trust in Jesus to save you from your sin. That belief is in vain. It does no good.

The Bible tells us that even the devil believes in vain about Jesus. We must believe in Je-

sus as the one who died for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected.

The Corinthians did not believe in vain. In verse 2, we see the result of the Corinthians receiving and standing on the truth of the gospel. The result was that they were being saved.

Next slide. What does “being saved” mean? "Being saved," means being rescued from the penalty, the power, and ultimately the presence of sin.

All of us have sinned, and the penalty of sin is eternal death in hell. When a person receives and stands on the gospel message that Jesus died for our sins, the person is set free from the penalty of sin. His sin no longer will send him to hell, because Jesus paid the penalty for sin on the cross. Saved means set free from the penalty of sin. We must really share so that people will be set free from the penalty of sin.

Even though we have been set free from the penalty of sin, we still struggle with the power of sin in our lives. We don't want to be critical, but we are. We want to commit ourselves to prayer, but we don't. Both are sin. As we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives, sin has less power over us. In small increments, we're set free from the power of sin. We must really share so that people will be set free from the power of sin.

When I pass from this life into eternity, I will be set free from the presence of sin. There is no sin in heaven. In heaven, I'll abide in the presence of God not the presence of sin. We must really share so that people will be set free from the presence of sin.

In verse 2, Paul tells us that the Corinthians were being saved. I am being saved. If you are a Christian, you are being saved. Salvation is a process. A Christian is saved from the penalty of sin immediately. A Christian is saved from the power of sin over the course of his life as he becomes Christ-like. A Christian is saved from the presence of sin in heaven. People need to be saved from their sins. That's why we must really share.

The title of my message today is “Really Share.” The good news of the gospel is what we should really share. We have a glad announcement that the world needs to hear. We know good news that we must declare to a world that is running in the wrong direction. We have the privilege of possessing the greatest story ever told. We must really share the good news of the gospel. The good news is that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins.

Our nation faces financial bankruptcy. The problem is a crisis, but it isn't as dangerous as our spiritual bankruptcy. Financial bankruptcy may last several years, but ultimately, it is temporary. Spiritual bankruptcy, if not dealt with, has eternal consequences.

Next slide. To be financially bankrupt, is to be without money. To be spiritually bankrupt is to be without Jesus. If a spiritually bankrupt person slips from this life, he or she will spend eternity in hell. It's a matter of life or death for real people. That's why we must really share.

"But Mark, I don't know how to tell people about Jesus. I'm afraid to share. I don't have time to share. I don't know who to share with. I don't know all the answers to all the possible questions. Besides, my life is a witness to others. That should be enough."

The points I just raised are common reasons for not sharing the gospel. Some of the points are somewhat valid. You may not know how to tell people about Jesus, but that will change over the next few minutes.

You may be afraid to share, but practice will resolve the fear. Initially, I was afraid to drive a car, but driving was important enough for me to conquer the fear and take the wheel for the first time. Then, practice took away the fear.

You don't need to know all the answers. The gospel message speaks for itself, and the Holy Spirit will provide the persuasion. If someone asks a question, for which you do not have an answer, it creates an opportunity for you to obtain the answer and meet with that person again. Not having the answer can be a good thing.

The excuse, I don't have time to share isn't a valid reason not to share. This week, record what you do in 15-minute increments. When you see where your time goes, you will discover that it will be easy for you to make time to share.

Certainly, our lives should be a witness to people. People should see something about our lives that they want for themselves. We should witness with our lives, but Jesus told us also to witness with our lips.

Next slide. An insert came with your bulletin. Please locate the insert. The top half of the insert is an outline for you to record your testimony. "Before I became a Christian, the most important thing to me was sports. When I was nine years old, I realized that I was a sinner and that my sin would keep me out of heaven. I learned that Jesus died to provide forgiveness for my sins. I asked Jesus to be the boss of my life and forgive my sin. Now, sports are not the most important thing to me; Jesus is."

A brief testimony can set the stage to ask the questions at the bottom of the insert. Or, you can begin with the questions.

The bottom half of the insert is one way to share the gospel from the Book of Romans.

The gospel presentation begins with five questions that determine a person's willingness to hear the good news about Jesus.

Ask Question 1. "Do you go to church anywhere?" If the person resists the conversation by saying something like, "I don't want to talk about church," don't go to Question 2. Instead, change the conversation or thank the person for his time and walk away. If the person is resistant at any point, stop the presentation.

If the person gives an answer, any answer, to Question 1, without resisting the conversation, ask Question 2. "Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?"

If the person gives an answer without resisting the conversation, go to Question 3. "Do you think there is a heaven or hell?"

If the person gives an answer without resisting the conversation, ask Question 4. "If you died today, where would you go?"

If the person answers anything other than, "Heaven," ask Question 5.

If the person answers, "Heaven," ask, "Why would God let you in?" If the answer is something like, "Because Jesus forgave my sins, and he is the Lord of my life," stop the presentation and enjoy the fellowship with a fellow believer.

For other answers, ask Question 5. "By the way, if what you believe isn't true, would you want to know?"

If the person resists Question 5 or answers, "No," change the conversation or thank the person for his time and walk away.

If the person answers, "Yes," open your Bible to Romans 3:23.

With your Bible positioned where the person can read it, ask her to read Romans 3:23. **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** Then, say something like, "All of us have lied, gossiped, been selfish, or committed some other sin."

Turn to Romans 6:23, and ask her to read the verse. **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Then, say something like, "Sin causes people to spend eternity in an awful place called hell unless the sin is forgiven. Jesus can forgive your sins, so that you can live forever in heaven."

Turn to Romans 5:8, and ask her to read the verse. **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Then, say something like, "Even though we have sinned, Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins."

Turn to Romans 10 verses 9, 10, and 13, and ask her to read the verses. **That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** Then, say something like, "To receive eternal life a person must believe in Jesus and confess that Jesus is Lord. Do you believe in Jesus?"

If the person answers, "No," change the conversation or thank the person for his time and walk away.

If the person answers, "Yes," say, "Would you like to ask Jesus to be your Lord?"

If the person answers, "No," say something like, "Thank you for your time. I hope you will continue to think about the danger of sin and the forgiveness that Jesus offers to those who follow him."

If the person answers, "Yes," pray with the person to receive Jesus as Lord. "Lord Jesus, I admit that I have sinned. I believe you died and rose again to provide forgiveness for my sins. Please forgive me. I want you to be the Lord of my life. Amen"

That is one of many presentations of the gospel's good news. With a little practice, you can master it and begin to really share.

Next slide. As Christians, we know the greatest story ever told. The gospel story is the good news that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, so we can have eternal life. **Receiving eternal life is as easy as ABC.**

"A" reminds us to admit that we have sinned.

"B" tells us to believe that Jesus is the Savior who died for our sins.

"C" lets us know we must confess that Jesus is the Lord of our lives.

Most of the world is separated from God because of their sins. The world needs to know that they can receive forgiveness through Jesus the Savior. How will they know...unless we really share?

Your Testimony

Briefly describe your life before you became a Christian.

Briefly describe how you became a Christian.

Briefly describe your life since you became a Christian.

Gospel Presentation

Begin with these questions. If the person resists at any point, stop the presentation.

1. "Do you go to church anywhere?"
2. "Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?"
3. "Do you think there is a heaven or hell?"
4. "If you died today, where would you go?" If the answer is anything other than, "Heaven," ask Question 5. If the answer is, "Heaven," ask, "Why would God let you in?" If the answer is something like, "Because Jesus forgave my sins, and he is the Lord of my life," stop the presentation and enjoy the fellowship. For other answers, ask Question 5.
5. "By the way, if what you believe isn't true, would you want to know?" If "No," stop the presentation. If "Yes," open your Bible to Romans 3:23.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. "All of us have lied, gossiped, been selfish, or committed some other sin."

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Sin causes people to spend eternity in an awful place called hell unless the sin is forgiven. Jesus can forgive your sins, so that you can live forever in heaven."

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. "Even though we have sinned, Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins."

Romans 10:9-10, 13 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." "To receive eternal life a person must believe in Jesus and confess that Jesus is Lord. Do you believe in Jesus?" If "No," stop the presentation. If "Yes," "Would you like to ask Jesus to be your Lord?" If "No," "Thank you for your time. I hope you will continue to think about the danger of sin and the forgiveness that Jesus offers to those who follow him." If "Yes," pray with the person to receive Jesus as Lord.