

The Life... Sharing our Faith

Over the last few weeks we've talked a lot about the Christian faith. We've wrestled through questions such as; what does it really mean to make a decision to follow Christ, what does the Christian life look like, how am I supposed to be a living sacrifice, and how God calls to grow in and step out in our faith. As we wrap things up tonight we're going to dive into what it means to share our faith. Just hearing the phrase, what sort of thoughts come to your mind.....? Some of us get kind of antsy, because we know that we are supposed to but we also know we don't. What are some reasons people don't share their faith.....?

These reasons and even some of our thoughts can easily become barriers between us and God and us and sharing the faith we supposedly have. Tonight, what we are not going to do is teach a model to share your faith. We're not going to go down the Romans Road or discuss the 4 Spiritual laws. What we are going to do instead is discuss a few principles relating to why you share your faith and how you share your faith. Before we go there though let's look at a way you could share your faith which may not be the most positive.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvYFvhx1dcY>

Let's talk for a second, looking at that video what are some of the obstacles that would need to be overcome for a person to come to Christ through this method....? What are some things there, that are positive.....?

You see despite what method you may or may not use, there are always some pro's and cons, and after all it's a method. That being said there are some principles that are helpful and there are some; well let's just say that it's not sharing your faith if you don't have these.

The first is this; we talk about things that are important to us or that that we get excited about. Think about the things you talk about, what are some things that dominate your conversations.....? Things like school, music, friends, sports, usually are high on the list? What's not high on the list? Home work, failures, problems, etc? Let me ask you; is God on your list? Is God, your relationship with God, is it important to you? Do you get excited about what He's doing, and how He's at work? Or is God someone who you don't talk about a whole lot? Remember the passage we looked at a few weeks ago...

Lk 6:45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

You see whatever is going on in our heart is what we end up talking about, so we really need to ask ourselves, "Is something off with my relationship w/ God if I'm not wanting/willing to talk about Him?"

The second principle we want to look at tonight is found in the books of 1 John and James...

...let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18).

Jas 2:17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead

The point here is this, some of us will go about our lives saying, "I share my faith by how I live" and others of us will hand out tracts, preach or teach others, or witness. The thing is that we have to have both, if we're talking about Christ then our actions should reflect that. If we are

living for Christ then why wouldn't we talk about Him? It doesn't make any sense. What some of us do as a copout is we say, "we'll I can't live like Christ, I can't be perfect. So I won't bother with either one. That's an excuse, Christ doesn't call us to be perfect, instead He calls us to follow Him. What are you striving for? Are you striving for excuses or are you striving for him. Remember as well that Jesus didn't tells the disciples to "share their faith", Jesus told them to "make disciples" by baptizing and by teaching. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward experience. In other words, God changes are hearts and we want people to know because it's important and we're excited, so we take part in baptism which symbolically shows that the old is dead (under the water) and the new has come (resurrection out of the water). Teaching isn't reserved for classes, teaching happens all the time. The example we set, the attitude we give, the heart we share, the words we speak are all examples of teaching. These two things are wrapped up in who we are as believers, overflowing out of each of us. You see we are all making disciples; we are all reproducing in those around us what's going on in the inside of us. The question is this, are we making disciples of Christ or of ourselves? If you are making disciples of yourself, your copping out, you've settled for thinking I can't do both so I won't do either. There's a lot on the line. Remember what Jesus said,

Mt 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. Mt 7:14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Most people are going to hell, and we have the message that will save others if they choose to accept and believe it. By not sharing, we are not only are copping out and missing what God has for us; we're partially responsible for the results. Yea, we don't make anyone reject or accept God. But God's given us the responsibility, no one else. Just us, the believers, we are disobeying God when we choose not to share with others what God has done. This really hit home with me when I saw this clip a few months ago...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhG-tkQ_Q2w

The guys a complete atheist and this conversation didn't change his mind, but the guy who shared His faith lived for Christ and talked about Christ in a way that got Penn's attention. For those of us who call ourselves Christians, can we say the same about us?

The third principle is this, be transparent; share the good and the bad. How many of you have had someone try to sell you something, what was it....? How many like it when you are being trying to be sold something....? Personally I hate it. If you were to read the bible you would see that when Jesus talks about God He never pushes it on anyone. He never attempts to sell His product? Why? God's not a product, salvation isn't a product, and our redemption isn't a product to be sold. It's a gift.

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— Eph 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

You see Jesus understood something that many of us don't get. God does the work, God saves, our job and Jesus job at the time was to share. Share in love, Share in life, share in truth, and share in grace. It wasn't always a pretty scene, there were a lot of people who rejected the message, there were a lot of people who rejected Jesus and they'll reject us as well. But that doesn't negate our responsibility to share. This is why, at the end of the day the decision of whether or not to follow Christ is between a person and God.

A few weeks ago I was preaching at "big church" and I made the statement that the only difference between a believer and a non-believer is God's grace and the person's decision. You

see we are all in process, so it's ok to mess up. It's ok to have a bad day. There are still consequences and there is still responsibility, but at the end of the day your relationship between you and God is just that, between you and God. And those who don't know Christ, at the end of the day they have a broken relationship between themselves and God, and it's just that, between them and God. Our job is to point them to Jesus. When they say "well, look at you, you are no better than me" Can you, will you say, "you're right, but I'm striving to follow God, are you?" Most of us won't because at some point we decided because we know Christ and others don't that we are better than them. That's a lie. The truth is that, as believers God calls us to a higher standard and chances are, when we hear a statement like that it's because we've messed up and been called out on our crap. So we get defensive and say things that only make the situation worse. That's a result of pride, and pride doesn't honor God. Pride becomes a barrier between us and God, us and sharing our faith.

What happens a lot of times is that we're not transparent; we share our faith, and because the person doesn't know us they don't normally accept the message. But we know the message is important, so we push. Sometimes we push to point where a person accepts Christ, but for the wrong reason. The end result is that a person accepts Christ into their way of life; essentially they add one more thing into their life. But we can't do that and have Christ as Lord. He has to be number one. He has to have rights to everything. We know though, if we say that, they may not "convert", so we don't. That's the problem. Some of us are so desperate for someone to get saved, that the message is compromised. This is sort of the situation Jesus is dealing with in Mathew 9:9-13

^{Mt 9:9} As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ^{Mt 9:10} While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ^{Mt 9:11} When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ^{Mt 9:12} On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ^{Mt 9:13} But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

You see the Pharisee's were in the same position as some of us are. They taught the word of God, shared it, but the life they lived didn't match it. So when Jesus called them out, they got defensive. As we share our faith, we need to be transparent and honest rather than pushy salesmen.

The final principle, and most practical is to know and write out your testimony. "Testimony" can be a churchy word for your story. When Peter was writing to the church in Jerusalem, he challenged them with this.

^{1Pe 3:15} But in your hearts set apart 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, ^{1Pe 3:16} keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Once we set apart Christ in our hearts as our Lord, we are supposed to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have. "The hope that we have" refers to our relationship with Christ. The best answer that we can give to any who ask for a reason for our relationship with Jesus Christ is our story, what He's done in our lives. People can and will debate with you about all sorts of bible stuff, God stuff, and church stuff. But they can't really argue with you about what who you are and what you've experienced. It's yours, your story, and your experience. You know it better than anyone. But we do need to be prepared, writing our story out helps us to

process what's happened. You don't need to have it memorized; it's just for you to help you think about it.

We have to remember that we're all in process, so even though our spiritual story hasn't ended yet, it does have three elements. The first element is our life before Christ, what was it like. In some sense, it's always full of sin. So what sorts of sin's got the best of you; selfishness, idolatry, disrespect? The next element is, what happened when you came to Christ; what were you forgiven of, what did you feel, what has changed? And the third element is this, what is your life like now that God has changed it. In other words, how is your life different is now that God is in control? Has anything really changed? Maybe you need to examine your faith, your walk with God?

Again guys, I'm not here to say, this is how you share your faith. Essentially it's between you and God. I can give and teach you methods on how to share your faith, but the reality is that those aren't nearly as important as the example you live, the words you speak, and what is flowing out of your heart. As we close tonight I want to challenge you to write out your testimony, what was life like before Christ, what happened when you gave your life to Christ, and how are things different now? If nothing's changed, you have some things to think about. The second thing I want to challenge us on is our transparency? Do we somehow think we are better than others because we're a Christian? How do we handle being called out on our crap? Are we striving for more of God, or are we only striving to look like we do?

Suggested Discussion Concepts:

- In all of these options, walk through the three elements; life before Christ, conversion experience, life after Christ.

1. Have students write out their testimony.
2. Share your personal testimony.
3. Walk through the process of writing out a testimony.
4. Ask if any students are willing to share their testimony.