



Ancient City
BAPTIST CHURCH

40 Days of Sharing



"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

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Welcome to the ***40 Days of Sharing!***

The ***40 Days of Sharing*** begins Sunday, August 6, 2023,
and goes through Thursday, September 13, 2023.

God has called us to be a community of *faith, hope, and love*. But He doesn't want us to keep our *faith* to ourselves. He wants others to enjoy the *hope* we have. He desires His *love* to be experienced by those around us. In short, we are called to spread this *faith, hope, and love*; we are called to share with others how our lives have been changed! I don't know a single Christian who doesn't *want* to share the good news with others. Most of the time, we simply don't feel that we know how to go about it or what to say. We are in need of practical encouragement. That's what the ***40 Days of Sharing*** is designed to be—practical encouragement to help you share Jesus in a natural, positive way.

We are excited that you will be joining us in this journey! **The format is simple: there is a short (one page) “chapter” for each of the 40 days.** We pray that this will both encourage you and equip you in your desire to share Jesus with others as together we are *pursuing life in Christ with passion and purpose!*



This emphasis is part of our plan of balanced Christian living we call **DiscipleLIFE**. Every Christian should grow in *head, heart, hands, and feet*. Stated simply:

- **A Disciple Learns**
- **A Disciple Loves**
- **A Disciple Serves**
- **A Disciple Shares**

While the primary emphasis of ***40 Days of Sharing*** is the “feet,” you will notice that it includes all four components of growth.

Thanks, and may God bless us all through the ***40 Days of Sharing***.

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The people began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

(Luke 19.7-10)

Are you glad you are a Christian? Do you remember when and how it came about? Do you remember the Holy Spirit of God working in your heart to convince you of your sin? God sent His Spirit to you to show His love for you and His kindness to you. Recall how you responded to God’s pursuit of you. Though the experience that Jesus called being “born again” is unique to each believer, there are common elements. And although you might not have recognized all of these separately at that time, several things happened when you came to know Jesus.

First, there was God seeking you because of His love for you. Second, there was an understanding on your part that you were unworthy of God’s love in your own mind; in other words, you recognized that you were a sinner who fell short of God’s glory. In response to the Word of God shared with you in some way—a preached message, a Bible study, someone sharing, the reading of the Bible or a book or a tract, or a combination of such things—combined with the mysterious work of God’s Spirit on the inside, you acknowledged your sin, you turned away from it (that’s what the Bible calls *repentance*), and you decided to trust Jesus as your Lord (or master or boss). You likely felt a sense of love, joy, and peace as you entered into a new relationship with God. You were adopted as His child, and you also became aware of many brothers and sisters in the family of God. Note that we can see these same kinds of things in the story of Zacchaeus.

Again, are you glad that you are a Christian? If you were not a Christian, knowing what you know now, would you want someone to tell you about Jesus and how you could be saved? Assuming the answer to both of these questions is a resounding, “YES,” shouldn’t we be telling others about Christ, even if they don’t yet understand their need? That’s why we are embarking on these **40 Days of Sharing**. We, as a community of faith, hope, and love, want to give to others the priceless gift that others gave to us: a witness, pointing us to Jesus Christ and eternal life!

Take a few moments right now to pray that God will use these 40 Days of Sharing to inspire you and equip you—and to help you touch others with His love and grace.



Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28.19-20)

Not only should we *desire* to share the gospel message with others out of our appreciation for our salvation and for how others witnessed to us, we are *commanded* by the Lord Jesus to do so! The passage above has been called the "Great Commission." We often use it to talk about missions to other nations, and certainly it applies to that. But in the original language, the main verbal command in the second sentence above is not "go" but "make disciples." And the "go" can also be translated as "going" or "as you go." What's the point? Jesus is telling us to make disciples as we go through life—anytime and anywhere. Yes, some are called to intentionally go to other nations as missionaries. Others of us are to make disciples "as we go" through life where we live. This commission to witness is to your neighbor as much as it is to people in other nations.

Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
(Acts 1.8)

Luke records Jesus sharing the "Great Commission" again, this time just before he ascended into heaven. Both speak of the need to witness locally and abroad. Both also speak to the fact that we do not go it alone. In the upper passage, Jesus promises to "be with you always." What does that mean? The Acts passage gives a bit more detail: "You will receive power *when the Holy Spirit comes on you....*" As we begin our **40 Days of Sharing**, perhaps you are nervous. But recall that, just as God initiated a work in your heart that made you receptive to the witness of others, it will be the same in your sharing. Depend on God throughout the process. His Spirit must work in the hearts of those with whom you share for it to bear fruit, and you want to share with the power of the Holy Spirit in your life for your witness to be most effective. So, it's not your job to talk someone into becoming a Christian (*you can't!*); your job is simply to share what Jesus has done for you and for the world.

Read today's Scripture passages again. Pray today that God will grow your witness through these forty days and that you will learn to share the message of Jesus as a natural but intentional part of your life—with grace and without fear.



Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few; beseech the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send workers into the harvest.”
(Matthew 9.35-38)

“Like sheep without a shepherd.” What better description could we give when we see family members, friends, and loved ones making decisions that we know are harming and even ruining their lives? When we observe the various fads and trends that captivate our world, when we peruse current media sensations—whether through movies, television, music, books, internet, etc.—surely “sheep without a shepherd” fits! Sometimes we get angry at the world, and that’s understandable. But Jesus saw people wandering through life without purpose in His day, too. And He had compassion. He knew these people were formed in the image of God! He knew there was so much more in store for them—if they only had shepherds to lead them in the right way! So He began to talk to His disciples—that’s us today—about the needs of the harvest.

What’s gone wrong with the harvest? Why are less people coming to know Jesus today in our culture? Why are fewer people active in the body of Christ? Are people today harder to reach? Are people today not concerned with spiritual matters? While we could argue the answers to these questions to some degree, the real problem is not likely a problem with the harvest. The real problem is a lack of workers. We will see more of a harvest when we see more people harvesting the crop that God is preparing.

PRAY FOR THE HARVEST:

- Write the names of three people you know personally who seem to you like “sheep without a shepherd.” Pray for these right now.
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- Pray that God would send witnesses into their lives.
 - Pray that God would use this **40 Days of Sharing** to inspire and equip you to be an effective worker in the harvest.
 - Remember, nowhere in this passage does it say to pray only for *vocational* workers (full time pastors, missionaries, etc.) to go into the harvest! Pray that the entire family of God would move into the fields to harvest.



I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time....

(1 Timothy 2.1-6)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

(2 Peter 3.9)

***The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.***

***He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.***

***For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;***

***as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.***

***As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.***

(Psalm 103.8-13)

As you read and meditate on these three passages of Scripture today, answer the following questions:

- Does God delight in punishing our sins?
- Does God want everyone you know to be saved?
- Does God want everyone you know to have the knowledge of how to be saved? *(If yes, who will tell them the truth?)*
- Do people need to repent of their sins and fear (i.e., respect and revere) God, or will God save everyone regardless of their actions and their attitudes toward Him?
- Will you see anybody today who God doesn't love?

Yes, the Bible speaks of the wrath of God, but how much more it speaks of His compassion for people. Just as He desired for you to be saved and worked to see it happen, He desires for those around you to be saved, too.

Take time to notice people today. You won't see anyone that God doesn't love and desire to save!



Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.
(Colossians 4.2-6)

If we want to be serious about the biblical truths that God loves people, wants them to be saved, and commands us to be witnesses (indeed, *declares* us to be witnesses) to them, we need a **strategy** for sharing. In the verses above Paul shares a brief strategy: we are told to pray, to be wise in the way we act toward those who are not yet believers, and to be gracious in our speech as we share. All of these are part of an overall strategy that is biblical and effective. As our **40 Days of Sharing** unfolds, we will be looking at a Ten Step Strategy for Sharing. We could word these differently, or add more, or combine some steps to make this list either longer or shorter, but let's see how God can use this strategy as we seek to partner with Him to see something that He desires and that we desire, too: people coming to know Jesus Christ as Lord and finding and following His purpose in their lives.

A Ten Step Strategy for Witness

- **Be Intentional**
- **Walk with Christ**
- **Pray with Purpose**
- **Prepare to Share**
- **Befriend and Serve**
- **Share Your Story**
- **Invite to Church**
- **Share His Story**
- **Trust God Patiently**
- **Follow Up Appropriately**

As we continue to make our way through our **40 Days of Sharing**, we will look at each of these in turn so that we might be better inspired and equipped to be the witnesses for our Lord Jesus that we desire to be—and that He desires for us to be, too!

Pray that God will help us be wise in how we share his wonderful message of grace with others. Pray that God will give you words of grace as you seek to share with others.



DAY 6

BE INTENTIONAL: Who Is a Prospect?

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."
(John 4.9-10)

When we think of a good prospect for the church, those who have been in church for quite a while likely think of someone who is already a believer who is looking for a church, someone who has already taken many steps toward maturity, someone polished, someone who is generous. When we see individuals with different social or political values, those whose lifestyle choices have left them without a good reputation, those who choose to dress or express themselves differently than many of us, and even those who have a different spiritual outlook, we often immediately mentally relegate them to a category like "not interested in Jesus" or even "not wanted"—by us! If so, we are not the only ones among Jesus' followers who may have been too quick to write people off! His own disciples were surprised when he was talking to the person in the passage above. She had several strikes against her—she was a woman (you didn't just go around talking to every woman back then, especially alone), she was a Samaritan (there was prejudice on both sides), she had been married five times and was living with yet another man at the time! Not exactly a good prospect, huh? Or what about the naked, demon-possessed man living in the graveyard (Luke 8)? Or the woman caught in the very act of adultery (John 8)? Or the poor blind beggar (John 9)?

Jesus shared with them all! He demonstrated that all that stuff about God loving everyone and wanting them saved is more than just talk—*God is serious about it!* Perhaps the first step to being intentional in our witness is to broaden our ideas of who needs our sharing. (And remember how you said if you didn't know about Jesus you would want someone to tell you?) *Whoever you see today who is not a believer needs a witness from someone*—or more accurately, some *people*! You are not responsible for every one. In fact, I believe you are most responsible for those you know well as opposed to strangers. But today, begin to intentionally see the lostness around you. Offer up a prayer for a waitress or a co-worker or a neighbor. Ask God to send people to share with them. Begin to get in your mind that **you** are a witness, whether you like it or not, because some know you are a Christian, and they see your life as an example of who Christ is or what a Christian is. The only question is whether you are a *good* witness consistently!

Meditate on the truth that you are a witness—and that there are people you know who need to know Jesus.



BE INTENTIONAL: Make a List

Jesus said, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.
(Luke 8.39)

The thought of sharing with others can make us nervous. It still happens to me at times! It can be nervousness about how to get the conversation around to spiritual things, fear of rejection, or simply the fear of not being able to answer questions that might be asked. Maybe we're afraid of being laughed at or lumped together in a category with some of the worst of the televangelists! Let's start with something with absolutely no fear involved. Let's start by intentionally thinking about those we know who need to know Jesus or who claim to know Jesus but show little or no current evidence. Then, let's begin to pray for them. Remember, the Holy Spirit must always go before us, and we are going to depend on Him to guide us in any witnessing opportunities.

So, today, write down the names of those you know—family, friends, even enemies—who need to know Jesus or take their part in His body, the church. Write them here:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now, circle the ones God has impressed most deeply in your heart. Add these especially to your prayer list. Put a check by the ones you sense God might want you to share with in some way as He teaches you how to do so naturally and effectively.

Challenge Goal: "I will seek to share in some way with at least _____ persons per week during the next 5 weeks as God gives me wisdom and strength during these 40 Days of Sharing."



BE INTENTIONAL: Divine Appointments

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

(Acts 8.29-35)

The first step in our strategy for sharing: **Be intentional.** In other words, determine that you will accept your given role as a witness, realize that there are people around you who need Jesus, prepare yourself to share, pray for God's guidance and power, and learn to look for opportunities God is giving you. You will likely discover that you may have missed opportunities God had prepared for you in the past simply because you weren't intentional about your role as a witness. Paul said to the Colossians, **"Make the most of every opportunity."** Let that be your motto, your guiding principle. Sometimes a smile is the most we can do. Sometimes it is a kind word. Other times it will be a word of testimony of what God has done for us or others—or a word about how the body of Christ, the church, has ministered in your life. Sometimes, you may be able to fill in the blanks for someone and reap the harvest when he or she confesses Jesus as Lord. Being intentional means looking for these opportunities and making the most of them.

Sometimes, that will involve long term cultivation with people you know who are currently resistant to the gospel. The rest of our strategy will give you insights for those long term witness challenges. But sometimes, in what some people call **divine appointments**, God will use you on the spur of the moment with someone you may or may not ever again come into contact with during your time on earth. An example is in the passage found above. (There is more to the story than what is printed—look it up!) Notice that Philip was intentional in listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, intentional in learning his condition, intentional in asking questions (a great skill in witness—and one that removes fears!), and intentional in starting where the man was and sharing about Jesus.

Step one—be intentional about your sharing!

Ask God to help you be intentional in preparing to share and to help you learn to share in a way that is natural for you.



"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
(Matthew 4.19)

When we recall with gratitude our own salvation, realize God's love for those around us, and receive His commission as witnesses, often our initial thoughts are about technique. How do I share? What words do I say? How do I bring the conversation around to spiritual things? How can I learn to answer the tough questions that have come up when I have tried to witness on other occasions? There is something more basic, though, when we decide to be intentional about our witness and the needs of others. ***The most effective way to share is to walk with Jesus.*** Please don't misunderstand. That doesn't mean we can be nothing more than "silent witnesses" who never tell others about Jesus. It means that we learn to live the truths of John 15. In verse 5 of that chapter, Jesus says, ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing."***

As an example of this, Peter and John, filled with the Holy Spirit, witnessed powerfully to the religious leaders as described in Acts 4. These Jewish leaders were amazed at both the courage of Peter and John and the fact that they spoke so powerfully even though they were "unschooled, ordinary men." The Scripture says, ***"they took note that these men had been with Jesus"*** (Acts 4.13). And even though you may believe you don't have enough education to answer all the questions that might arise and you may consider yourself an ordinary person, don't despair! Walking with Jesus isn't really the preparation for witness; walking with Jesus ***is*** witness! And as you walk with Him through the power of the Holy Spirit, He will lead you in learning His word and giving voice to the words you need to share.

Remember, Jesus also said to us, ***"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"*** (Matthew 5.16). We don't walk with Christ to call attention to ourselves; no, we walk with Christ with the hope and prayer that people will be moved to honor and glorify God when they see the good deeds he leads us to do.

How's your walk with Jesus these days?

Spend a few moments in silent meditation, asking the Holy Spirit to point out to you how you are doing in your walk with Jesus—and how He can give you the strength daily to "bear much fruit."



DAY 10

WALK WITH CHRIST: Disciplines

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
(Colossians 2.6-7)

In the passage above, Paul encourages those who have received Christ as Lord, that is, those who have placed their faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sin and for eternal life, to understand the decision as simply the first step of an ongoing journey with God. In fact, in the original language of the Bible, it literally says, “*so walk in Him.*” The Christian life is characterized, then, by receiving Jesus and walking with Him, following in His footsteps day by day. Another way to express this is that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God and follow His guidance. The Holy Spirit is nothing more and nothing less than Jesus living inside of you! Yet, too often Christians fail to allow the Holy Spirit to lead. Rather than being filled by the Spirit, we may resist the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, or even quench the Spirit’s fire in our lives. How do we make sure our habit is to be filled with the Spirit?

Note again the Scripture passage above. It speaks of being “rooted,” “built up,” “strengthened,” and “taught” in our faith to the result that we overflow with thankfulness. All of these words illustrate the need for discipline and growth in our Christian lives. The Bible teaches, and throughout history we have seen in the mighty men and women of faith, common disciplines that set the stage for spiritual growth. It is true that some go through these disciplines as nothing more than religious rituals and are no better off toward God than the legalistic Pharisees of Jesus’ day were, about whom He quoted the passage God spoke through Isaiah: ***“Their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.”*** Yet, it is also true that you will not grow into a mature, firmly-rooted, fruit-bearing disciple without them. Use these disciplines, then, as tools that help you grow in Christ and daily walk with Him.

What are these disciplines? They include worship, Bible reading and meditation, prayer and fasting, vital membership and participation in the church, submitting to godly teaching, performing ministry (service) with spiritual gifts, being financially generous to the work of God and helping the needy, and encouraging others toward a walk with God. Yes, practicing these disciplines from a heart of love for God will cause you to grow strong in your faith, resulting not only in your great thankfulness to God (as noted in the verses above), but also in your growth in desire and effectiveness in sharing Christ with others.

Again, please don’t let these disciplines overwhelm you. Their purpose is to help you grow, not become burdens. You may find a need to change *how* you practice them from time to time. Don’t get in a rut. Keep your walk with God fresh!

What disciplines are you using now to help you walk with Jesus?



DAY 11

WALK WITH CHRIST: Restoring Your Witness

“Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.” (Acts 8.22-24)

You may feel that you are disqualified from being an effective witness to those you know because you have blown it in front of them. It may have been on one occasion or many, but you feel that you have no credibility because of your past words or actions. Perhaps you have given way to your temper or cut too many corners, listened intently to or even told stories or jokes that are not in harmony with the character of Christ, compromised your convictions for your own gain, or made decisions for your own welfare without regard to how it might adversely affect others. Now you wonder if there’s any way to ever be an effective witness to those who know of these failings. *There is!* But it is not easy. First, of course, you need to go to God and ask Him for forgiveness and guidance. Pray for the people involved and make things right in front of them. Go to them and confess how you have done wrong and that you are sorry for it. How do you know who to include? If they saw it or you know they are aware of it, it is probably good to include them. Whether you talk to them in person, together or alone, or send letters or make phone calls depends on the circumstances and the leadership of the Lord, but confession is likely the only way to restore your witness.

You see, most times when we sin publicly, we really *are* repentant and ask God’s forgiveness—privately. But others don’t know it! Then we talk about God on a subsequent occasion to these people and they think, “What a hypocrite!” You’re not a hypocrite—you have confessed and repented to God—but they are unaware of it. So it’s natural that they think you are a hypocrite. But if you, in an appropriate way, tell them, “The other day I blew it in front of you. You know that I claim to be a Christian, and there is no excuse for what I did. But I want you to know that I have asked God’s forgiveness, and now I ask yours. I am especially sorry if my actions have caused you not to consider the reality of God. As someone once said, ‘Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.’ He’s forgiven me. I hope you will, too.”

Wow! What a powerful testimony that is! To humble yourself in this way in today’s society will make most people take notice of the sincerity of your faith. And it can restore your witness before them.

Can you think of people with whom you need to take steps to restore your witness by walking with Christ? How will you do it?



DAY 12

PRAYER: For Witnesses

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few; beseech the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send workers into the harvest."
(Matthew 9.37-38)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
(Colossians 4.2-4)

We are often told to pray for lost people. You have already been encouraged specifically to do so on at least two of the previous days in our **40 Days of Sharing**. And it is right and proper to do so.

However, a discovery I have made during my study of what the Bible teaches about prayer and sharing is this: ***When prayer is taught and encouraged in relationship to witness and evangelism, it is almost always taught and encouraged toward the witness or evangelist!*** It may be that it is so natural for us to pray for those we love who need Christ that it is not often highlighted. But it is still significant that when the Bible teaches on the subject, we are more often encouraged to pray for the worker than the one needing Christ. Could it be that, since ***"God does not wish for any to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance,"*** His emphasis is more on the need for witnesses to take the message to those He is already preparing to receive it?

Jesus has a heart of compassion for the "lost"—those who need to know Him. He sees the fields white with harvest—but the harvest is dying in the field. Why? Not enough workers. Paul doesn't usually specifically ask for prayers for the lost. Instead, he asks for prayer that an open door will be opened so that the message can be proclaimed. He asks for prayer that he will be able to make the gospel understandable to the listeners.

Since this is the emphasis of the Bible, let's make it our emphasis as well. Pray for God to ***send witnesses*** to those on your list. Pray that those witnesses would share clearly. Pray for yourself, that you will be a witness for Christ. Pray that your walk with Jesus would be consistent and that your words would be clear.

And let's pray for each other as partners in witness. It is likely that as several people witness to a single person, the truth of God becomes more clear.

Yes, let's pray for each other, that we would become a mighty witnessing team for our Lord Jesus, and that many would come to know Him through our collective sharing!



DAY 13

PRAYER: For Those Who Need Jesus

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

(Luke 23.24)

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

(Romans 10.1)

While the Bible's main emphasis in prayer about evangelism and witness may be directed toward the worker, as noted yesterday, we do see a couple of examples in the Bible of prayer for the “lost”—those God is seeking to “find”—and these are certainly powerful examples!

Jesus, even while experiencing the pain of his scourging and crucifixion, remembered His purpose for taking up the cross. As He scanned the crowd that included sneering Jewish religious rulers and mocking soldiers who gambled for His clothing, Jesus uttered words that we can hardly fathom: ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*** Even as He was dying at the hands of wicked men, He prayed for them, knowing they were ignorant, blinded by the evil one. Why do we so often rail against and condemn the world rather than understand its spiritual darkness and its great need for the light of life? Yes, the wrath of God finally awaits the godless and wicked who suppress the truth. But does not God desire they turn away from their sins and turn toward Him? And for those of us who have received forgiveness, do we not long to see others repent and have the sinfulness of their lives replaced by love, joy, and peace?

Look back to the list you made on Day 7. Is it your heart's desire and prayer to God for them that they may be saved? Are you lifting them up before the Father regularly? Are you praying that God would send many witnesses into their lives? Are you praying that their hearts might be softened to the gospel message?

Exodus 11.3 says, ***“The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people [of Israel], and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.”*** As you pray for those who need the Lord, ask that God would make them “favorably disposed” toward you and other witnesses so that your sharing will be well received.

Remember, prayer is a mighty part of our strategy to be bold and effective witnesses to those who need to know Jesus.

Pray right now for your list of lost or unchurched people. Pray for others who God may bring to your mind today and add their names to your list. Pray that God would work in their hearts to bring conviction of sin and an understanding of the gospel. Ask him to draw them to Himself with a sense of His overwhelming love. Pray that He will prepare their hearts to hear the witness of others.



PRAYER:
A Ministry and a Witness

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

(1 Timothy 2.1-2)

It is easy to see that prayer undergirds our witnessing efforts and puts the focus on God rather than on our own efforts. It reminds us of our dependence upon Him as we seek to obey Him. But did you know that prayer can also be a witness to others? Before I give some examples, let me say that prayer is always God-focused, and talking to God is the main purpose of prayer. But a by-product, if you will, of true prayer can be a witness to others.

For instance, when you pause to give thanks for your meal, those who observe you will be given a witness to your faith. When others join us at a meal, we want to be careful not to bring embarrassment to them, of course. Often, a phrase like, “Our habit is to give thanks to God for our food; could I say a blessing for us?” is sufficient. When you are a guest in someone else’s home, you have to decide whether to suggest an “out loud” prayer or simply thank God in your spirit.

In restaurants, I have learned from watching others and then trying it myself, that it can be very natural to say to the waiter or waitress, “We are about to have a blessing for our food. Is there anything we can pray for you about?” Usually the responses are positive, though from time to time the person just says, “I can’t really think of anything right now.”

Individuals and churches are finding that many people are less threatened when someone knocks on their door or meets them in a public place with an invitation to share prayer requests rather than jumping straight into the gospel. Perhaps a neighbor who is not open to a gospel presentation at the moment might be open to, “The Bible tells us to pray for our neighbors, and I was wondering if there is anything specific in your life I could be praying for.”

Prayerwalking is another activity that is meant for prayer but can also turn into a witness. What is prayerwalking? Just what the word implies — praying while walking. As you walk down the street, go slowly and pray for those who live in each house as you pass. Every now and then, someone may ask you what you are doing. Just tell them—and ask if they have specific requests. Many missionaries use prayerwalking as their first foray into a new area. We can use it, too.

Prayer—let’s be sure to include it as a priority in our strategy for reaching out to those who need Jesus. Pray right now for wisdom as you seek to become more and more effective as a witness.



DAY 15

PREPARE TO SHARE: What You Need to Know

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"
(John 4.28-29)

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"
(John 9.24-25)

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.
(Luke 8.38-39)

"I can't be a witness! What would I say? What if they ask me questions I can't answer? I just don't know enough yet."

These are the kinds of objections a potential witness often makes when he or she considers talking with someone else about faith in Jesus. And these objections can paralyze us with fear. To be sure, these are good questions to consider. Fortunately, we see a wonderfully reassuring answer to such questions in the examples of Scripture.

In each of the Scripture passages above, a person shares a testimony on the very day he or she met Jesus! What did each share? Only what he knew! The woman at the well said, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Notice that she still had questions of her own, but the townspeople did come, and they believed in Jesus, too.

The man born blind was asked a hard question. He simply said (to paraphrase), "I don't know the answer to that question. One thing I do know—I used to be blind and now I can see because of Jesus!"

Likewise, the formerly demon-possessed man simply told what Jesus had done for him.

These are good models for us. Just tell your story (we'll talk about this more in a few days). When questions you don't know how to answer come up, don't try to fake it. Just say, "Hmm. I don't know the answer to that question right now. But I will try to find out for you! What I **do** know is that Jesus has made a difference in my life, and I hope you have noticed it too."

The simple truth is, you will never know enough of the answers as you think you need in order to start sharing the good news! So just tell what you know *now*, and as you walk in Him, you will soon discover you are learning more every day!

Pray that God will give you new insights daily and that you will share what you *do* know and not be afraid of what you *don't* know!



DAY 16

PREPARE TO SHARE: What Is the Gospel?

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also... (1 Corinthians 15.3-8)

If someone were to ask you, “How do you become a Christian?” what would you say? As we prepare to share, we need to know our message! Until you become comfortable with it, you can always use a tract or get others involved, but as you grow, you certainly want to be able to answer that question accurately.

Of course, we need to know the facts of the gospel, and Paul gives them to us succinctly in the verses above. We need to know that Jesus really is the Son of God who came to earth, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, was raised from the dead by the power of God, and many eyewitnesses saw the risen Christ. We also need to know that since He is the only one who has died to take the penalty of sin on our behalf, He is the only way that we can have our sins cleansed (be forgiven) and experience the abundant and eternal life He desires for us. But people also need to know how to respond to the facts of the gospel.

Here’s a brief outline of the main points to include as you share:

- **God loves us**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3.16)

- **We have sinned and become separated from God**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3.23)

- **God has provided a way back to Him through Jesus**

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3.18)

- **We must turn from our sins and declare Jesus to be the Lord (or master or “boss”) of our lives to be saved**

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. (Romans 10.9)

This is merely the *briefest* of outlines. What a paradox! The gospel is so rich we can never fully comprehend it; yet, it is so simple that a child can understand the basics.

Could you share this basic outline if someone asked you, “What must I do to be saved?” Pray that you will be able to do so!



DAY 17

PREPARE TO SHARE: A Gospel of Grace

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

(Titus 3.3-7)

It is easy to become angry or disgusted at the people of the world around us when we see the lifestyles many of them live. But if we want to see people turn to Christ, they need to first see our love for them. And for them to see our love, we must have, like Jesus, authentic compassion for them. Compassion might start with remembering that you also were enslaved to sin before you were saved.

I think some of us inwardly have come to think that we really weren't that bad, that we really weren't as hopeless as some other people. Please read again—slowly—the passage above.

There is only one gospel, and it is a gospel of grace.

There is only one way we are saved, and that is by the kindness and mercy of God, poured out on us through Jesus Christ.

As it says above, we were not saved by the righteous acts that we have done but by His grace. His grace was sufficient for the thief on the cross who was promised paradise by Jesus; His grace was sufficient for the apostle Paul, who persecuted Christians before his own conversion; His grace was sufficient for you when you repented of your sins and asked for His forgiveness, and His grace is sufficient for all the diverse people you will come into contact with today or any other day—in St. Augustine or wherever else you go.

The term *gospel* means “good news.” And the gospel of Jesus certainly is good news. Jesus can transform the lives of “sinners” into “saints.” And He offers this transformation to us freely as we place our trust in Him and declare Him to be Lord of our lives.

As you prepare your heart to share the good news of Jesus, remember His love, remember His grace, and remember His mercy... *for you*. And remember that He wants to do the same in the lives of others, and He is giving you the privilege to be a part of the process by being a witness to His power to save and transform!

Pray that others will see God's love through you! Pray that you will remember how you have been changed!



DAY 18

PREPARE TO SHARE: The Need for Community

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12.4-5)

American culture champions individualism. It is often advocated to such an extreme that we are led to believe we can exist apart from and without consideration for one another. This even even happens within the church. We often look for a church that meets *our* needs and fits *our* schedules without regard for the needs of others. But we need to recapture that truth that God has never in history called out a **collection** of individuals but rather a **community** of faith, hope, and love.

We often neglect this truth when we prepare to share the gospel. We rightly remember our loving, merciful God who loves all people. We correctly include the need for personal repentance of sin in order to receive forgiveness. We appropriately focus on the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But we forget that the church—the body of Christ, the bride of Christ—is a part of the message, too.

The church is not an “add-on” option to the Christian faith like a sunroof is an option for a car. No, when a person comes to Christ, they are born *into the church*. He or she desperately needs the church just as a newborn baby needs his or her family.

Can you imagine assisting with the birth of a baby but then leaving the baby on the side of the road? Too often, that happens with baby Christians! They are left without nourishment (the Bible and prayer), without clothing (the character of Christ), without family and instruction (the church). Some think you can embrace Jesus without embracing His church. The Bible presents images of the church that say you cannot. The church is presented as **the body of Christ** with Christ being the head. You cannot separate the head from the body and have vibrant life, can you? The church is also presented as **the bride of Christ**. Do you think Jesus will look favorably on someone who rejects the the very bride He gave His life for? He is united with His bride—and you are part of that bride!

Churches are not perfect, but they are part of the gospel. We all need to belong to a community of faith, hope, and love—here is no exception. As you prepare to share, remember that the job is not done until the new believer takes his or her place as an active, committed, participating member in a local body of believers. Everyone needs a church. Whether it is this church or another, let’s encourage those with whom we share to find their places in an authentic community of faith, hope, and love.

Pray that we and others will see the need for the church as part of God’s plan—and that we will build up the body of Jesus.



DAY 19

PREPARE TO SHARE: Rooted in the Word

From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3.15-17)

As a witness, you are a messenger from God with a message from God. Does that sound redundant? Perhaps, but here's the point: throughout the history of the church, we have seen men and women who claimed to be messengers from God who have not delivered the message that God entrusted to them. The apostle Paul warned us about this long ago: ***"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths"*** (2 Timothy 4.3-4). While Paul addresses the problem in these verses from the point of view of the hearer, he speaks of those who are willing to say what others want to hear rather than sharing the truth. Regarding true witnesses, though, Paul writes, ***"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us"*** (2 Corinthians 5.20).

An ambassador does not make up his own message to deliver to the leader of another country. He shares the message given by his head of state. Can you imagine all the potential ramifications if an ambassador from our country, for his own reasons, added to the president's message, left out parts that he thought might be perceived as offensive, or did not speak with absolute clarity when it was required? Wrong decisions are made with faulty information. If we don't clearly share the message of the gospel or if we water it down or add something to God's message of grace, it could cause others to make eternally wrong decisions!

I don't say this to scare you away from sharing. After all, you have been appointed already as an ambassador. You don't have the option not to share! Instead, I say this to remind you of the sacred trust you have been given. Stay rooted in the word of God. As stated above, the Scriptures are able to make people ***"wise for salvation."*** While your words can be used to clarify and encourage, it is only the message of Christ that can save and transform lives.

So, stay rooted in God's word for the message you share with others as well as for your own growth toward maturity. Read the word. Meditate on it. Apply it in your life. Let it change you. And it will thoroughly equip you to do this and every other good work that God has prepared for you!

Pray that God will give you greater understanding of His word!



DAY 20

BEFRIEND AND SERVE: Who Do You Know?

Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." (Acts 3.6)

About two weeks ago (on Day 7), you were asked to make a list of people you know so that you could pray for them. Now that we are half way into our **40 Days of Sharing**, let's take that a step further. Through your knowledge of those people and your prayers on their behalf (and perhaps asking them for prayer requests, as we discussed on another day), have you become aware of some of their needs? Is there any way that you could serve them in their need? You might be like Peter, who didn't have any money to give to a man described in the Bible as "crippled from birth," but as an apostle he had the gift to perform signs and wonders, including healing. Think how you might be able to show kindness through service to those you know.

It might be through a monetary gift, if that is a need they have and if it is in your power to give; it might be through the use of the gifts and talents you possess; it might be through a display of love and concern by encouraging words and even tears. The same Peter mentioned above later wrote to us, ***"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ"*** (1 Peter 4.10-11). By serving others and combining that service with speaking gracious words, God can be praised! Often your service itself will open the door for sharing your message as others thank you or ask you about the kindness you have shown. Even the gift of "a cup of cold water" can be used and blessed by God.

To whom can you show the kindness of friendship and service today? Think about your activities for the rest of today. Who will you see? Is it anyone on your list from Day 7? Or perhaps another friend or acquaintance? Perhaps it will be a stranger who simply needs a friendly face and/or words of encouragement. Take a moment right now to ask God to give you opportunities to befriend and serve at least one person today. And make that a daily prayer!

God uses existing lines of relationship more than anything else, perhaps, in getting His gospel out to the world. Pray that God would use your friendships—and even casual acquaintances—as conduits for spreading the message of the gospel.

What opportunities to befriend and serve came to mind as you prayed? How might you carry those out today?



DAY 21

BEFRIEND AND SERVE: Making Friends for Christ

Then Jesus told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root."
(Matthew 13.2-6)

There are some people today who are simply not open to the things of God. They seem closed to any talk about Jesus or the church. Why are people like that?

It could be that they have had a bad experience in a church—they saw people who should love each other more than any other group on earth not only fail to do so but lash out at each other. These people may have pain from a church and are determined not to try again.

It may be that they are disappointed in God. They may have been taught or came to believe, mistakenly, that faith in Jesus shields us from all problems in life. Then, when their lives or the lives of their loved ones were touched by pain, illness, or death, or when promises they *thought* God had made did not come true in areas like love, family, or career, they became disillusioned with the idea of God. Or they began to think that God plays favorites.

Or it could simply be that the evil one has so blinded them to the truth of God that their hearts are hardened.

How do we reach people who seem closed to God and the church?

While people may be closed to God right now, they may still be open to our friendship. Their hearts may be softened by kindness. They need to see the lives of consistent, committed Christians. A major problem for many nonbelievers is that they don't have a relationship with a "real" Christian whose walk and talk can be observed in everyday life. Much of their understanding—or misunderstanding—of God and the church comes from channel surfing "Christian" TV or from popular caricatures. Just imagine what they must think about Christianity based on these! Can you understand why they have such strange concepts about God? And why they may think faith doesn't work in the day to day of life?

Yes, people need to have a Christian as a friend. I know that you have plenty of friends, but are you willing to make a friend for Christ? Are you willing to be open to meeting someone new today that needs to see real faith lived out? Ask God today about those He is placing in your traffic patterns of life. Be willing to be open to new people. Today, and every day, be ready to make a friend for Christ!

Pray, asking God to help you identify who may need a friend today.



DAY 22

BEFRIEND AND SERVE: Let Your Light Shine

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5.16)

As we think about being witnesses for Jesus, we should not overlook the importance of simply living the Christian life! Jesus went about doing good, and so should we. But our motives are important. Just minutes after Jesus told His listeners to let their light shine, He also warned them, ***“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”*** Some do good deeds just to be noticed by others. Jesus wants us to use our good deeds to point others to the Father who can save them.

To be effective as a witness through friendship and service, it is important to know ways you can minister. What are some of your gifts and talents? Jot a few ways down. Don’t overlook the little things. Remember that Jesus affirmed even the gift of a “cup of cold water”!

How can you use these gifts and talents to draw others to Christ? And how can you make a natural link in conversation between how you have served and the God who motivated you to do so? That can be awkward at times, can’t it? After all, when someone thanks us, we want to be gracious without coming across as either overly prideful or falsely modest. Each of us must figure out how best to make the connection in a natural way within our own personalities; consider these as examples:

“I’m glad I could be of help. I always enjoy being able to use the gifts God has given me.”

“You’re welcome. God has given me a desire to serve others, and I’m glad you found it helpful.”

“The Bible says God wants us to serve each other. He has sent me a lot of help over the years, and I’m glad I could help you today.”

“You know, I may not have helped you at one time in my life, because I am basically pretty selfish! But God has been showing me how true it is that it is ‘better to give than to receive.’ I really get joy now out of helping others!”

Let your light shine that others may be drawn to Christ! Pray that you will be open to possibilities today.



SHARE YOUR STORY: **Examples from the Bible**

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. (1 Timothy 1.15-16)

There is one thing that almost everyone wants: **a changed life**—at least in some aspect. For instance, many people want a change in their weight (they almost always want less!). Others wish they could change their looks in some other way—like a makeover. Some just want to change the look of the house they live in. Many people wish for a career change.

Have you ever noticed that advertisements for change normally focus on someone who has achieved the desired affect? “I lost 40 pounds in 3 hours! You can, too!” Makeover shows display “before and after” shots demonstrating how “plain” can be turned into “striking.” My wife watches “home and garden” channels to get ideas of how to make our house more pleasing. Schools advertise that their classes can transform your career from dead end to high paying and fulfilling. Yes, we all want change, and stories of change inspire us. Most inspiring of all are stories of change in character and life direction. That’s because inward change seems to be the most elusive of all.

Can Jesus really change a life? People want to know. They want to see it. They want to hear how it happened. The apostle Paul often shared his testimony with others as he preached the gospel. As in the passage above, he let people know that if God could change him, He could change them, too.

During our **40 Days of Sharing** we have alluded to other people whose lives were changed by Jesus. Zacchaeus demonstrated the change in his life with a newly generous spirit, not exactly what you would normally expect to find in a tax collector. The woman at the well—an outcast who avoided people—ran to everyone to tell them about Jesus. The formerly demon-possessed man, now dressed and in his right mind, certainly impressed the townspeople when he explained how much God had done for him. People were amazed when the man born blind simply said, “All I know is that once I was blind and now I can see.”

Your testimony, whether or not you consider it dramatic, is a powerful tool God will use to prove His power to change lives. In fact, “simple” testimonies will likely connect with the people around you.

Think about it: how has God changed your life?

Pray that God will give you insights for naturally sharing your own story in the next few days...



SHARE YOUR STORY: Preparing Your Testimony

Read Acts 22.1-21 and Acts 26.1-29 from the Bible

Three times in the book of Acts, we hear the story of how Paul came to know and follow Jesus. The first time, in Acts 9, Luke narrates the story. The other two times, Paul tells it in his own words (see passages above). As we read Paul's testimony, we can learn some tips for sharing our stories. Consider this simple outline:

My life before I became a Christian

Paul described how he had once been an enemy of Jesus. What was your life like before Christ? Depending upon the situation and to whom you are speaking, you may speak of your sins in general terms or very specifically. I have found that speaking generally about sin is preferable when my life is very unlike the person with whom I am sharing. The greater the similarity, the more specific I am as I speak. If you have had a "wild" background, don't speak excitedly about your past life. After all, that is a source of shame for you today. On the other hand, if you have lived a "mild" life, please don't make the mistake of believing you were saved by how good you are. Your sins, no matter how small they may seem compared to those of others, were big enough to separate you from God forever without the sacrifice of Jesus.

How I became a Christian

Tell how you became aware of your need for Jesus, how you came to understand the gospel, and how you made the decision to follow Jesus. Be careful to use words that will be understood by your listener(s). For instance, some people describe their conversion as "walking the aisle" or "joining the church." You want to make sure that someone could hear your story, decide to follow Jesus, and know how to make a similar decision by following your example.

How following Jesus has changed my life

Unfortunately, some people end their testimony with their conversion experience. As we mentioned yesterday, people desire change. Tell them how Jesus *has* changed and *is changing* today your life for the better. Tell them about the love, joy, and peace you have in your life because of Jesus. Tell them how He gives you guidance day by day and is with you even in the midst of difficulties.

One more thing: ***Make it brief.*** Try to be able to give your basic testimony in one to two minutes—practice your testimony to other believers. You can always add details as interest is shown.

Think through your own story. Pray that God would help you to be able to share your story briefly to let others know what Jesus has done and is doing in your life.



**DAY
25**

SHARE YOUR STORY: Who Will They Believe?

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus... Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1.40-42, 45-46)

I've heard many express a preference for witnessing to strangers rather than those they know. They believe they will be ineffective in witnessing to family and friends or perhaps that doing so will cause friction or awkwardness between them. But let's think that through a bit.

If someone told you about an amazing new product to buy, wouldn't it carry more weight coming from a trusted friend rather than from a total stranger? Similarly, your family and friends are much more likely to believe you rather than a stranger who tells them about Jesus. The stranger doesn't have the credibility you do. Perhaps you're concerned that you have not lived a consistent Christian life in front of these people. If so, I encourage you to re-read Day 11!

The pattern of Scripture and the history of the church show that the gospel spreads most rapidly through lines of relationship such as family, friendship, and culture. A wonderful example is that of the Philippian jailer. On the night he was saved, his whole family came to believe. God wants to use your relationships to reach people, too. He knows that even if they react as Nathanael did in the passage above, you can respond like Philip: "Come and see." You can invite them to investigate further!

Don't get me wrong. I am not discouraging you from witnessing to strangers. Often, a witness from a stranger gives added credence to a previous witness from a family member or friend, or it sets the stage for a person to be more receptive to a witnessing friend in the future.

The point is this: God has placed people in your life for a purpose. He undoubtedly wants you to love them and minister to them. And there is no better way to demonstrate love than to point people to Jesus Christ, who loves them and helps them discover their purpose in life. One man told me he didn't witness to coworkers because he was afraid they might feign interest because of his position. While I appreciate his concern, I shared with him my belief that God had put those people in his life for the very purpose that he could have influence with them.

Yes, those you know personally will believe you more easily than strangers will.

Think about it! And pray for wisdom in influencing them for Christ.



SHARE YOUR STORY: A Little at a Time

As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." (Acts 24.25)

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." (Acts 26.28-29)

Many witnesses take a long while to build up the courage to share about Jesus with family and friends. When they're finished, they often feel frustrated if there is not an immediate response. They believe they have shared everything they have to share, and they don't know what else to say. To compound this problem, I have heard some Christians ask, "Why should someone get a *second* chance to respond to the gospel before some people have even had one chance?"

The truth is, just as fields need cultivation before seed takes firm root, the hearts of men and women also need cultivation so that the "seed" does not fall on hard soil. Hearts are cultivated as those who need Jesus see confessing Christians live lives of love and integrity, as they hear the word of God, as the Holy Spirit moves in answer to the prayers of concerned believers, and in other ways.

In the two examples from the apostle Paul above, we note that his witnessing to men like Felix and Agrippa *were not one time events but an ongoing process*.

That's the way it will likely be for you. One day you will share a testimony. Another day you will invite the person to church. In daily conversation about current events, you'll include something from the Bible that relates. You will talk about people in church and how they have ministered to you. Many days you will simply be a kind and loving friend who faithfully follows Jesus! You will find that witnessing to those you know is an ongoing process. It will become natural. There will be times to speak and times to be silent and pray. The Holy Spirit will help you as you seek to ***"make the most of every opportunity"*** (read Colossians 4.5-6). Learn to ask God at each event: ***"What's the most I can make of this opportunity?"*** and ***"Who might I be able to reach out toward in this crowd?"***

A couple of days ago we talked about your testimony. You don't have only one testimony. You have dozens of them: how you were saved, what the Bible means to you, how prayers have been answered, how God used you, how the church helps you, and on and on. In witnessing to family and friends, don't try it all at once. Trust God to use your sharing— a little at a time!

Ask God to give you a "little" to share with someone today...



**DAY
27**

INVITE TO CHURCH: Worship Evangelism

But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"
(1 Corinthians 14.24-25)

Some people think it's a copout—a shirking of responsibility—to simply invite someone to church rather than share with him or her yourself about Jesus. And perhaps it *is* if you truly do it as a substitute, but inviting people to attend church is absolutely appropriate as part of an overall strategy to help someone come to know the Lord Jesus.

In the verses quoted above, Paul contrasts the confusion that often accompanies speaking in tongues with the clarity of prophesying. In that same chapter, Paul defines prophesying as speaking “to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.” This is what pastors and others are called to do in public worship. Men and women who need Jesus Christ need to hear His word presented clearly. The witness of your life and the witness of your words will be multiplied in impact when those you invite see a multitude of believers worshipping God in spirit and in truth and when they hear a clear, encouraging message from God that applies to everyday living while pointing to Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Do you understand the implications? True worship is an evangelistic activity! Seekers can tell the difference between people who simply attend a worship service and those who actively worship the Lord. We need to each examine our own hearts each week before worship. We need to engage in the singing and the prayers. We need to expect that God will speak to us. We each need to realize we're part of a *community* of faith, hope, and love, and not just *individual* worshipers. That means we must be aware of those who are around us. Those of us who lead in the elements of worship must prepare thoughtfully and prayerfully. I have the awesome responsibility to seek to bring a message from God that is at once an encouragement to believers yet can also be understood by seekers.

Will you invite someone to worship this week? Who will it be? Will you offer to pick them up or meet them in the welcome center? If it's the latter, will you make sure you arrive before they do? (Most people feel a little uncomfortable their first time in a new place.) Will you invite them to lunch afterward? That's a great way to get feedback (and a good incentive for them to come).

Consider making a goal of inviting one person to attend worship with you each month (or another period of time).



**DAY
28**

INVITE TO CHURCH: Links in a Chain

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.
(2 Timothy 1.5)

Timothy, the young man that Paul called his “son in the Lord,” became a believer through the witness of his mother and grandmother and probably many others. Think back to how it happened in your life. How many people contributed some kind of witness that influenced your coming to know God?

Personally, my parents took me to Sunday School and church. There, countless Sunday School teachers, choir leaders, “Training Union” workers, and other people pointed me to Jesus and encouraged me to follow Him. The pastor preached sermons (and sometimes I listened!). All of my grandparents were believers. They encouraged me through their *walk* and *talk* to follow Jesus.

It was during Vacation Bible School one summer that I publicly confessed my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. But the invitation by the pastor to become a Christian that day was not a “Damascus Road” kind of experience for me. It was the result of years of witness in my life. The pastor was simply the last link in the chain that brought me to faith in Jesus Christ.

As a pastor, I often have the joy of being the last link in the chain. I often get to be present when the decision for Christ is made. But I realize in most cases that I would not have that privilege without there being many other links before me. And I hope that someone else will be the last link in a chain for those I have witnessed to who did not respond at the time I shared. I’m happy to be *any* link in the chain that results in someone deciding to follow Jesus.

You, too, have likely been a link in the chain for others who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. If not, I hope you are now becoming a link in the lives of many who will take that step in the future. You may think you need to be a teacher in the church to do that. But that’s not the only way.

One of the reasons we invite people to church is to provide more links in the chain. When you invite someone, you introduce that person to other believers. Your friend finds that you are not alone in your faith. When others invite their friends and when people simply walk in off the street, you become a link when you introduce yourself with a smile and genuinely show an interest in their lives.

What a privilege to be a link in the chain of salvation!

Pray that God will make you a link in the chain for someone this week. Pray that you will show hospitality to guests each Sunday.



INVITE TO CHURCH: Special Events

“I have come that you might have life, and might have it more abundantly.”
(John 10.10 NAS)

What do you do when people you are praying for and witnessing to seem to show no interest whatsoever in spiritual things? No matter how many times you invite them, for whatever reason they will not attend a church worship service or Bible study. First, let me be quick to say that many people give up too soon! People who study such things tell us that, on average, a person must be invited *seven times* before he or she will attend. I have also heard that people must hear the gospel message clearly seven times, on average, before they place their faith in Jesus. And in our American culture, that time is certainly lengthening. I don't pretend to know whether these are actual statistics or educated guesses, but even if they are close, that means if one friend attends at your first invitation, it may take thirteen for another! Many times, we give up too soon. Remember, we don't want to badger people so that they never want to be around us, but we don't want to make the opposite mistake of quitting altogether, either.

Back to the original question: what do you do for those who simply will not come to worship or a Bible study? Try this: invite them to special events that are not “churchy” in themselves but where they can still meet other Christians. Some examples are block parties, dinner theater performances, ball games, and hobby classes. Use your creativity! Life Groups (Sunday School classes) and other groups should plan activities for both fellowship and outreach. You see, many people suffer from the illusion that Christians do not enjoy life. If your friend can be invited to a special event that is designed to be nothing but fun or appeals to an interest he (or she) already has, he will still meet other Christians, and God can use those encounters to help the person learn that Jesus really meant it when He said, ***“I have come that you might have life, and might have it more abundantly.”*** Additionally, those people he meets become more links in the chain that leads to salvation.

I know a lady whose husband would not attend a church service but was willing to come for a dinner theater, a light evening of entertainment. He was so impressed with the *people* he met that he became open to coming to our worship! That's the power of the church: it truly can be a community of faith, hope, and love that attracts others by the quality of life that is lived out among them. What event can your group plan that would offer such an opportunity?

Everyone needs to experience a community of faith, hope, and love. Everyone needs a church—some just don't know it yet. Let's show them!

Pray that your group can plan an event to which you can invite those who won't come to a “church service.” What can that be?



SHARE HIS STORY: Knowing Where to Start

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.
(Acts 8.29-31)

At some point, the time will be right to share with someone the gospel (“good news”) of Jesus. (We have touched on preparing for this on Days 15-18.) Where do we start? The passage above gives us two insights.

First, be sensitive to God’s Holy Spirit.

Somehow, Phillip clearly sensed the voice of the Spirit putting him in the right place at the right time. Are you seeking to be aware of God’s voice in day to day living? When you come into contact with others, do you ever ask, “Lord, in what way can I be a witness to this person?” Whether it is through a smile, a prayer, a word of encouragement, an invitation, a brief testimony, printed material, the gospel message, or simply establishing a casual friendship that may allow you to be a “link in the chain,” you can ***“make the most of every opportunity.”*** Remember, though, that we have already been declared to be witnesses (Acts 1.8) and commanded to make disciples (Matthew 28.19-20). Therefore we must be careful not to wait for a mystical feeling before we ever share. Part of being sensitive to the Holy Spirit is applying God’s word to a particular circumstance. Ask, “How can be a witness here?”

Second, ask questions to help you determine where to start.

Note that Philip asked a question. That’s a good strategy for all of us, too, for several reasons. First, many witnesses are nervous. Asking questions allows you to relax while the other person talks. More importantly, the answers to your questions help you know where to start. For instance, if you ask, “Have you ever been involved in church?” the answer you receive (from that and follow up questions) will help you know if you need to start with the assumption that the person has no Bible knowledge at all or if he or she knows a good bit about the Bible and its message. Questions can also help you gauge how your witness is being received. “Does this make sense to you?” often helps you clarify interest, understanding, and the Spirit’s work in the person. In my experience, little is gained in continuing when the person is not interested. Gracefully stop until the next opportunity. Questions also allow you to learn the person’s needs. Then you can show them how Jesus can minister to those needs. Finally, questions keep it a dialogue. No one wants to listen to a monologue!

Think and pray about some questions *you* could ask others to help you begin sharing with them!



SHARE HIS STORY: The Good News of Jesus

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8.32-35)

In the continuation of the story from yesterday, questions helped Philip determine where to start in sharing the gospel. Through questions, Philip was able to determine both interest and understanding. What are some questions you can ask? Try these:

- *Do you go to church anywhere? Does it mean anything to you?*
- *What do you understand to be the main message of the Bible? Can I share with you how I understand it?*
- *Do you believe in life after death? How do you think a person gets to heaven? If you were wrong, would you want to know? Here’s what the Bible says...*
- *Do you consider yourself to be a follower of Jesus? (How so?)*
- *How do you think people find out about God?*
- *What do you consider your purpose in life?*

These are just examples. You will want to think of questions that work for you in your situation and fit your personality. Of course, when you ask questions, be prepared for all kinds of answers! I have learned that a good response to answers that are unanticipated is, *“That’s interesting...”*

Sometimes you’ll be asked questions in return. Then you, like Philip, can begin there to tell the good news about Jesus. Even if you are not asked a question in return, the responses you receive from your questions will help you in sharing the good news.

The good news is ***“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation”*** (2 Corinthians 5.19). We were God’s enemies, but He sent Jesus to make peace. Look back to Day 16. It has verses that go with this brief outline of the gospel:

- **God loves us**
- **We have sinned and become separated from God**
- **God has provided a way back to Him through Jesus**
- **We must turn from our sins (repent) and declare Jesus to be the Lord (or master or “boss”) of our lives to be saved**

Pray that it will become very natural for you to ask questions and share the gospel message with others.



SHARE HIS STORY: Tools for Sharing

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 1.17)

The word of God must be given if people are to be saved. Today, there are many tools that can help us share. As always, the Bible is both the best tool and the authority by which all others must be measured. Many people simply like to quote the Bible as they share about Jesus. The following verses, all from Paul's letter to the Romans, have come to be known as the "Roman Road to Salvation": 3.23, 6.23, 5.8, 10.9. Many memorize these and share them in this order to give a logical synopsis of the problem of sin, the love of God, how God has made a way for us to be saved, and what our response must be.

Some like to use short witnessing booklets, or "tracts." Billy Graham's *Steps to Peace with God* is one of many good ones. Some witnesses read the tract along with the person rather than trusting themselves to remember all that should be shared. Others share a brief testimony and then give a tract, saying, "This booklet gives an overview of the Christian message. Would you read it when you have a few moments?" Some leave tracts for others to find, such as on the table after a meal. (If you do this, leave a generous tip!)

Books by Christian authors can be good witnessing tools, too. Some books, as you would suspect, deal with the meaning of life. (*The Purpose Driven Life*, published back in 2002, is a well-known example.) Other books, though, may cover topics of particular interest to your friend: success, finances, depression, anger, marriage, happiness, etc. When approached from a clearly Christian viewpoint, these books can be more "links" in the chain. **(See the Appendix for a Book List.)**

Sermons can be shared as podcasts, YouTube videos (or similar), etc., especially when you believe the particular message will touch a need or interest of a particular person. Make sure you have listened before you share! Many church websites—ours included—feature ways to listen to or download messages and include presentations of the gospel that may be helpful to you in your witness. The key to all of these, though, is to make sure they are consistent with the Bible. Remember, there are many "false prophets" who can cause confusion!

Another powerful tool for witness: a personal letter. You may feel frustrated in your verbal attempts. Write a letter, sharing your love and care for the person—and the gospel message. Before you send it, have a friend read it to make sure it is clear and that you do not come across with a condescending attitude. Your letter can be a lasting witness!

Pray that God will give you many "tools" in your witness toolbox!

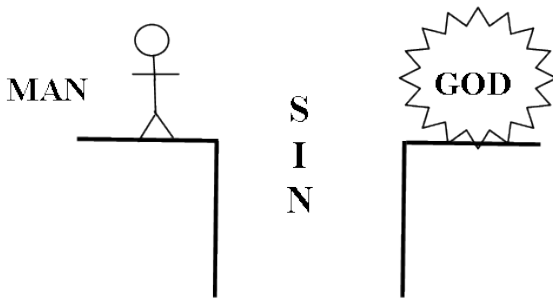


SHARE HIS STORY: The Bridge Illustration

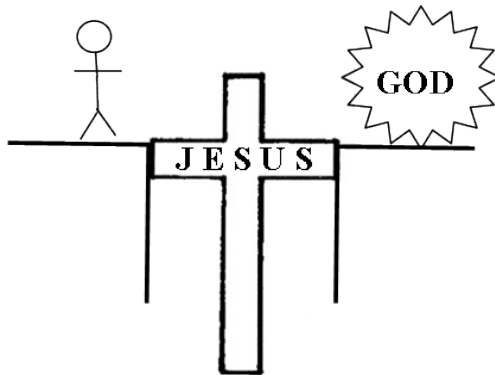
For me, one of the most useful and effective ways of sharing the gospel story is drawing the “bridge illustration” with the Scriptures and outline below (similar to the outline given on Days 16 and 31). While the way I draw it with others is more elaborate than can be presented here, I think this gives you the main idea...

1. God created us in His image and loves us with an everlasting love. (Genesis 1.27, John 3.16, John 10.10)

2. There is a gulf between us and God because of our sin. (Romans 3.23, 6.23, Hebrews 9.27)



3. God bridged this gulf by sending Jesus, His Son, to die on the cross to take the penalty for our sins. (Romans 5.8, 1 Peter 3.18)



4. We must each respond to God by turning away from our sins and turning to Jesus, declaring Him our Lord (or “boss”), and truly believing the miraculous story of Jesus, including His resurrection. (Romans 10.9-10)

At the end, ask:

- **Does this make sense to you?**
- **Where are you in this illustration?**
- **Are you ready to “cross over” to God’s side?**



SHARE HIS STORY: **Asking for Commitment**

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.

(Romans 10.9)

While we may share over a period of weeks or even months or years, there comes a time when we must ask the person to make a commitment to Jesus. When you sense God’s Spirit at work in the person’s life so that he (or she) understands the gospel and is drawn to God, it is time to ask. Here are some questions that may be helpful in determining the right time. “Does this make sense to you?” “The Bible says each person must individually make a decision to believe in Jesus—that is, to become a Christian. Is there any reason you would not be willing to make that decision right now?” It is certainly okay to gently encourage—Paul said, ***“We try to persuade men”***—but be careful of talking someone into saying some words he or she doesn’t really mean just to please you—or to get you off his back! At times, it may be better to say, “Let’s talk about this again later after you have had more time to consider the decision.”

When a person is ready, though, how exciting that is! The verse above tells us that a person who truly believes simply has to confess or declare that he is making Jesus the Lord—or leader or “boss”—of his life. At that moment, the person becomes a Christian!

Most of the time, though, it is helpful and meaningful to lead the person in a prayer. In that prayer, it is appropriate to thank God, ask for His forgiveness, and declare Him to be Lord of life. Some will pray on their own. Others may wish to repeat the words after you, since this may be their first real prayer. In either case, remind them that these are not “magic words” but must be truly meant from the heart. After praying, I normally ask, “Did you mean what you just said to God?” If the response is yes, I continue, “That’s wonderful! You are now part of God’s family and you always will be. He has given you the gift of eternal life.”

Here’s a sample prayer:

“Dear Father, I know that you love me. I believe that you sent Jesus to die for my sins. I want to make Jesus the Lord of my life and follow Him always. I ask you to forgive my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. Please show me how you want me to live. I love you and I thank you. I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

The Bible says the angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents! We should celebrate, too. But this is not the end of your work. In many ways, it’s only the beginning.

Continue to pray for those on your list. Ask God to help us reap a harvest as we work in His field.



TRUST GOD AND BE PATIENT: Paul's Example

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."
(Acts 26.28-29)

The work of a witness can certainly be discouraging, for not everyone makes the decision to follow Christ. Jesus said this about the abundant, eternal life He offers: ***"Few are those who find it."*** How sad! We see people all around us who truly need Jesus, but many do not understand. Even when people *do* understand, many are not willing to repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus.

But don't give up. Some who do not make the decision to follow Jesus now will come to faith later. Some who do not listen to you today will listen to you tomorrow. Some who do not "get it" in the present will understand it some time in the future. Some who will not listen to you will listen to someone else. Some who will not listen to other people now will one day listen to you.

Paul did not give up. Whether it was a short time or long, he would continue to share. He had learned to simply preach the gospel and then trust God. If Paul, the most effective missionary and evangelist of the first century, had to trust God and be patient, how much more will we be called to do the same!

Go back to Day 7 and look over your list. Do you need to add more names to it? Think about where each individual is in relation to God. Some may be close to a decision. Some may seem far, far away. Different people may have different barriers to belief—some intellectual, some emotional, some moral and spiritual. Can you think of an individual strategy for each?

In your discouragement, have you quit praying for some? Determine anew which people God seems to be most impressing upon your heart. Redouble your prayers for them and your resolve to share in ways that are appropriate for where they may be in their journey toward God.

Trust in God. Be patient. Don't give up!

Pray that God will refresh your heart today toward those who need to know Jesus. Enlist others to pray for some on your list.



TRUST GOD AND BE PATIENT: The Holy Spirit

Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6.44)

Jesus said, "When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." (John 16.8-11)

It's not up to you if a person comes to know Jesus. You cannot make it happen. As the passages of Scripture above make clear, it is up to God to draw a person to Himself. When you became a Christian, God was drawing you to Himself. You had to respond with faith and repentance, yes. **But salvation is always initiated by God.** In fact, a person cannot come to Christ just anytime he or she wants—a person can only come to Jesus when God the Father is drawing him or her. Having said that, God is anxious to save, as we have already noted. But it is important to note that we cannot talk anyone into becoming a Christian. We can, however, be tools in God's hands, and He has commanded us to share. Knowing that the results, though, are up to God's drawing and the person's responding gives us freedom. We can trust God and be patient, letting God care for the results when we have been faithful to obey His command to share the message.

Just how does God draw someone to Jesus? Through the Holy Spirit. In the **believer's** life, the Holy Spirit guides, indwells, empowers, counsels, and comforts. You have experienced His work in your life. In the **unbeliever's** life, His role is to "convict the world" about sin. Another way of saying that is that the Holy Spirit works in the soul of man to convince him he is a sinner, that sin results in death and hell, and that he has no way to save himself. The Spirit goes on to impart the truth of the righteousness of Christ—that is, that Jesus is the sinless Son of God who died on the cross, taking the penalty for our sins (since He had no sins of His own to pay for) in ways we cannot fully comprehend, and that He was raised to life again, showing that victory over sin and death is possible for those of us who trust in Him. The Holy Spirit reveals to us just how great the love of God is for each one of us as demonstrated in His sacrificing Himself for our sakes. That's how it happened in your life; that's the way it will happen for your loved ones who come to know Him.

So, relax. Don't be nervous. Enjoy your freedom in Christ. Share in the power of the Holy Spirit—and leave the results to God. After all, He is even more concerned about your loved ones than you are!

Ask the Holy Spirit to work today in the lives of those on your list.



FOLLOW UP APPROPRIATELY: A Baby Is Born!

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...
(1 Peter 2.2)

Before a baby is born, we spend much time and energy in preparation—we fix up the nursery, bring in a baby bed, acquire a rocking chair, buy a changing table—things like that. And though the birth of the baby is a cause for celebration, that event is not the end; it's just the beginning! After all, we don't leave the baby at the hospital. We take the child home to nurture this gift from God!

The same is true with spiritual birth. When a decision is made to follow Jesus, a person experiences what Jesus calls being "born again." Often, when someone we have witnessed to makes a decision, we feel a wave of relief—we are tempted to think our job is done. It's not. Yes, celebrate the birth! Then it's time to nurture. The new Christian is often about as helpless as a newborn baby. If we don't give them the "pure spiritual milk" they crave, they will not grow. It would be like leaving the baby at the hospital or on the street corner. We can't do that. We need to follow up appropriately.

The verse above helps us understand part of what we mean by "appropriately." Babies need milk. As they grow, they move on to solid food. So it is with baby Christians. They need to understand the basics of the faith. What are some of these? In Hebrews 6, the writer speaks of ***"the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."*** This gives us an idea of the basics, that foundation: helping new believers understand more fully how our sin leads to judgment but how the grace and love of God provides forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we repent of our sins and place our faith in Christ, we come into His family and have assurance of eternal life.

He also speaks of baptism. Each new believer should follow the Lord in baptism. It's a command from Jesus and a beautiful symbol that speaks on three levels: the water symbolizes the washing away of sin that occurred in our lives when we came to believe; the immersion under the water beautifully pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; and this immersion also symbolically shows that our "old" person has died to sin and that we have been raised with Christ to ***"walk in newness of life."*** Only the baptism by immersion of a believer captures the total symbolism of baptism. Even though it is a symbol, it is biblically important, showing our obedience to Him and demonstrating our new faith to others. Encourage new believers to follow Jesus in baptism!

Pray that many will come to faith and follow Jesus in baptism.



FOLLOW UP APPROPRIATELY: A Baby Needs Food!

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
(Hebrews 5.13-14)

With our physical bodies, growth cannot be accelerated. We can't jump from being an infant to a teenager in a year. Growth takes place at a steady and predictable rate.

In the life of a new Christian, though, the pace of growth is not as rigid. Sure, there is the matter of Christian experience and wisdom that comes with the passing of time, but that is not "automatic," either. Some people who have been Christians for years and years are in reality still "babes in Christ" because they have never gone beyond the "milk" to the "solid food." On the other hand, some fairly new Christians seem to grow as much in their first couple of years as others do in a decade or more. What makes the difference? Much of it has to do with the person—and the spiritual "parents."

We tend to blame lack of growth totally on the new Christian, but can we expect a baby to feed himself? No, the baby needs his mother to feed him. New Christians likewise need Christian "parents" to feed them and lead them to maturity. When you have been a link in the chain of someone coming to know Jesus, your job is not complete. You have the responsibility to help him or her grow in the faith. What nourishment does a new Christian need?

- **God's Word**

The Bible tells us about God. The Bible tells us about ourselves. The Bible lets us know how we can come to know God. The Bible gives us wisdom for living. The Bible serves as our guide for life. The Bible instructs us regarding right and wrong. The Bible helps us forsake sin and cling to God. The Bible is the primary food for the new Christian. Encourage him to read it. Help her to learn it. Ask him to memorize it. Challenge her to apply it to life's circumstances. Invite him to a Life Group (Sunday School class). Sign her up for a discipleship class.

- **Prayer**

Some liken prayer more to breathing than to eating. Either way, the Christian cannot thrive without it. The new Christian needs to learn from Jesus' model prayer (and other Bible passages) how to communicate with God and depend on Him through prayer. Help your child in the faith learn to pray!

- **What else? More tomorrow...**



FOLLOW UP APPROPRIATELY: A Baby Needs Family

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2.42-47)

Babies need food. Babies need clothing. Babies need guidance. Babies get all these things from family. Yet, too often, baby Christians are left to fend for themselves. Worse, they are often led to believe that being an active part of a family of faith, hope, and love is optional. *It is not! It is absolutely imperative for a Christian's growth that he or she be a part of the body of Christ, the church.*

Why do so many feel that the church is optional to the Christian life? I think there are two main reasons. The first is the overemphasis in our culture on individualism. Yes, each person must follow Christ individually, and we have enjoyed the fruit of individual effort in our culture, but we err when we make Christianity too individualistic! God has never simply gathered a collection of individuals; He has always been about creating *communities* of faith, hope, and love. We are each individual parts of the body of Christ. We have our own function, but we only live and thrive when we are connected to the other parts of the body. Let's allow that wonderful biblical metaphor of the body to guide us into the proper balance of understanding: *we need the church!*

The other reason some reject the church is they see it as a dead institution rather than a living community. We must certainly guard against an institutional mentality. Again, though, membership in the body of Christ is not optional. When we embrace Christ, we also embrace His body. We can pray for it, work to improve it, and listen for God's direction about where we fellowship, but we cannot ignore the body of Christ. When a person is born into the kingdom, he or she becomes a member of God's church. We must help those who come to Christ find their individual places of membership in a local expression of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. No church is perfect, ours included. Our families weren't perfect, either, but God likely has used them in our lives. Certainly, care should be taken in helping someone choose a church, and highly dysfunctional churches must be avoided, but make no mistake: just as people need the Lord, people need a church. We all need to belong to a community of faith, hope, and love!

Pray that we all would take seriously the church as Christ's body, taking our part and building unity.



DAY 40

40 DAYS OF SHARING: The End, or a Beginning?

Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
(Acts 1.8)

Congratulations! You have made it to the final day of our emphasis called **40 Days of Sharing**. In these forty days, you have been encouraged to live out your calling as a child of God—the calling to be a witness to those that God has put within your sphere of influence. We have looked at a simple ten-step process:

- **Be Intentional**
- **Walk with Christ**
- **Pray with Purpose**
- **Prepare to Share**
- **Befriend and Serve**
- **Share Your Story**
- **Invite to Church**
- **Share His Story**
- **Trust God Patiently**
- **Follow Up Appropriately**

In this short time frame and with this brief daily format, have we been able to do a complete and thorough job in helping you in your task of sharing? Probably not. But hopefully you have received some motivation to share and some practical suggestions for doing so. Perhaps your appetite has been whetted to learn more, and—more importantly—to share more (and more effectively). If so—great! We will be offering witness training courses regularly. Many books are also available that will encourage and equip you. We will also furnish opportunities for you to witness through planned events in addition to the opportunities the Lord gives you through your family, friends, and acquaintances.

Our hope is that this is not for you simply the end of the **40 Days of Sharing**. We hope, instead, that it is only the beginning of the most exciting days of our lives as we walk with our Lord Jesus through the power of His Spirit—and that His Spirit will empower us to lovingly share with the people in our world how they can receive forgiveness of sins and discover the abundant and eternal life that He offers!

May God bless us all as we seek to fulfill our privileged calling as witnesses for Him. To Him be the glory forever!

What is God saying to you as this 40 Days of Sharing emphasis draws to a close? What are your next steps for sharing?



40 Days of Sharing

Appendix

The following
is a *short* list of books that may be helpful to you in sharing Jesus with
others.

Books to give to seekers (in alphabetical order):

Basic Christianity by John R. W. Stott
Case for Christ, The by Lee Strobel
He Chose the Nails by Max Lucado
How to Be Born Again by Billy Graham
Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis
More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell
Purpose Driven Life, The by Rick Warren
Reason for God, The by Tim Keller

A sampling that may help you in your sharing (in alphabetical order):

Becoming a Contagious Christian by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg
Concentric Circles of Concern by Oscar Thompson, Jr.
Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable by Sam Chan
How to Give Away Your Faith by Paul Little
Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry & Mary by Lee Strobel
Know Why You Believe by Paul Little
Making Friends for Christ by Wayne McDill
Master Plan of Evangelism, The by Robert Coleman
Meeting Needs, Sharing Christ by Atkinson and Roesel
Out of the Salt Shaker by Rebecca Pippert
People Sharing Jesus by Darrell Robinson
Reinventing Evangelism by Donald Posterski
Share Jesus Without Fear by William Fay
Sharing God's Greatest Gift by Tammy Davis
Surprising Insights from the Unchurched by Thom Ranier
When Can a Child Believe? By Eugene Chamberlain
You Bring the Bagels, I'll Bring the Gospel by Barry Rubin



40 Days of Sharing

Thank you for participating in ***40 Days of Sharing!***

Do you have any comments about your experience? Any insights to share? Any suggestions for future emphases?

Please send an email to fred@ancientcitybaptist.org or mail a note to:
40 Days of Sharing
Ancient City Baptist Church
27 Sevilla St.
Saint Augustine, FL 32084

You may also contact us through our website and by phone:
www.ancientcitybaptist.org
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May God bless us all as we *learn, love, serve, and share!*

Pastor Fred

Other “40 Days” Experiences



40 Days of Learning

Jesus gathered around him disciples—that is, those who would *learn* from him. He told those of us who are weary and burdened to take up his yoke—his teaching—and *learn* from him. But he wasn’t just talking about “book learning.” Too many of us have learned *facts* but haven’t really learned about life and how to truly *walk with God*. That’s a fear with our ***40 Days of Learning***—we will approach it as information only. The truth is, there *is* a lot of information in the ***40 Days of Learning***, but please recall that Jesus told us not just to *teach disciples*, but to *teach disciples to obey*. Our hope is that these ***40 Days of Learning*** will draw us closer to God himself, not just the concepts presented.

40 Days of Love

When Jesus was asked to identify the greatest of all the commands God had given, he was not able to limit it to just one. He said: “*The most important is ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other command greater than these.*” (Mark 12.29-31). But how do we love God? Our neighbors? Ourselves? That’s what the ***40 Days of Love*** is designed for—to give practical encouragement in how to love *God, others, and self* according to God’s ideas of love!

40 Days of Serving

God has put us together in his body, the church, and given gifts to each of us for service. As such, we are to minister to one another, helping each other along the journey of life. But there’s more. He wants us to expand the community by sharing the message of faith in Jesus Christ with others and including them in our community. One of the most powerful ways of sharing the message of Jesus is by serving others in the Name of Jesus. Our world around us has heard enough “talk”—they need to see our faith in action that gives credibility and authority to our message. But how do we go about serving? That’s where the 40 Days of Serving comes in—it is designed to give biblical and practical help as we seek to grow in this area of following our Lord Jesus.

Join with us again for our next “***40 Days***” adventure!

