



September 8
Rev. Andrew Shoger
Romans 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Romans 1:16

What is the gospel? According to the Apostle Paul, the gospel is power. God’s power. That’s a good reminder for us. Too often in evangelism we allow our weakness, apprehension, or fear to paralyze us. We fool ourselves into thinking that since we aren’t as eloquent as our pastor, or as well-versed in key scriptures, we don’t have what it takes to convince our neighbor to receive Jesus as Lord. The trouble with that line of thinking isn’t only that we allow our insecurities to paralyze us-- it’s also that it wrongly assumes that we have any ability to change a sinner’s heart.

The beauty of the gospel is that the power to transform a sinner’s heart is from God and not us! Our role in sharing the Good News is obedience. God’s role is bringing the power to “remove the heart of stone...and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Remember, God is a God of grace. He grants to sinners what we don’t deserve. For the unregenerate, that entails a new heart, an ability to see Jesus for who he is, and the gift of faith. For you and me, that grace grants us the courage and the power to share the gospel with our neighbor. Ask the Lord today to convince you of his power and his ability to use you for the sake of his kingdom!

September 9
Rev. Mark Bolhofner
Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before others. Matthew 5:16

Evangelism and the church. A lot of what we do could be labeled the “Come and See” approach - publicizing what we offer hoping something will attract someone.

But research shows that isn't effective with Gen-Xers (born '61-'81) and Millennials (born '82-'04). Ed Stetzer writes in *Comeback Churches*, “Developing an effective evangelistic strategy requires stages, helping people move from the ranks of the inactive and unreached to being active followers of Jesus Christ.”

“‘Come and See’ has not produced good results,” he adds, “The bottom line is, churches also need to train people to ‘Go and Tell.’ With few exceptions, people come to Christ in steps, and those steps usually involve conversation and community with believers.”

So create opportunities for church members to invite and interact with unbelievers (a cycling group, tutoring, a NASCAR fantasy league, a cooking class). The thought is to create an environment where friendships can be made.

Then extend an invitation to attend to an “open” small group. “Relationships are the key to assimilation,” writes Harry Reeder in *Embers to a Flame*, “and I know of no better way to do that than through small group ministry.”

And the next step? Invite your friend to a study or to worship.

“Let your light shine before others,” Jesus told His disciples. And since they won't “Come and See” we've got to “Go and Tell.”

September 10
Rev. Lee Shelnut
Matthew 15:25

But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” Matthew 15:25

Jesus' exchange with the Syro-Phoenician woman as recorded in Matt. 15 is such a striking passage. One of the most striking aspects of the story is her utter display of her need. There was just no way she was going to hide it. She wasn't going to let pride,

offense, or cultural and relational barriers stop her from pleading and revealing her great need. Jesus' disciples standing nearby needed to see and hear that too - and so do we.

Need. When we think of evangelism and need, we think of our own need of the salvation that only Jesus can give, and we probably think of unbelievers needing the saving grace, mercy, forgiveness and life of Christ through his shed blood and resurrection. Rightly so.

However, we are wise to see need from another angle. That woman's grace-enabled willingness to own and express her need led to glorious blessing. By grace we've owned and expressed our own need in a God-given faith to our Savior and Lord. But, are we willing to own and express our need of the help of others? Have you ever needed the help of an unbeliever — maybe a coworker, boss, teacher, mechanic, or a nurse? Have you ever thought that in that acknowledgement of your temporal and material need there might be a doorway into a gospel conversation where you, one needy beggar, points another to the Bread of Life?

Recently, I found myself with my father in his hospital room where he was battling a very serious infection. We needed the expertise of doctors and nurses. We didn't have the luxury of pride or cultural barriers or personal space or whatever to stand in the way of his need. As doctors and nurses from various national, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds ministered to my father and his owned and acknowledged need, beautiful gospel moments opened up. One of those encounters late in the evening between a needy patient, a needy son, and a wonderfully helpful nurse ended with a burden of guilt being lifted from her as she looked to Jesus as the lover of her soul and her Savior and King!

Friends, don't waste your need. Don't despise the day of small things.

September 11
Rev. Clint Davis
Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

If you're like me, you tend to equate "witnessing" with personal evangelism when we personally share the good news of Jesus Christ with other people. But, is that what Jesus meant when he made this familiar statement? I don't think so. Sure, there is a personal, individual component to our evangelistic efforts. Jesus, however, is talking to the disciples as a group. They will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world.

This is important. Why? Because Jesus says that they – individually and corporately – will serve as witnesses to the reality of his life, death, and resurrection. They will testify to his glory with the words they say, in the way they live their lives, and in their Christian fellowship.

The same is true for us. The Church of Christ, and its many different congregations, has one primary responsibility: to witness to the glory of Christ. We are to tell his story to the nations in the way that we worship him, love one another, and invite others to join our fellowship. Evangelism is a matter for the whole congregation as we invite people to join the Christ-worshipping family of God that proclaims the good news of the gospel.

Who can you invite to church?

September 12
Rev. Stuart Fowler
1 Peter 3:15

“always be prepared to make a defense to anyone” 1 Peter 3:15

When the Lord Jesus brings us to saving faith, we soon find out that he expects us to share this wonderful grace with others who do not yet know him. We Christians are to “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone” (1 Peter 3:15).

Why do the majority of Christians struggle with following through with this obvious command and duty? Very often, “small things” get in the way. “Small things” like fear of man; what others might think or say or do if we attempt to evangelize them. In reality, our fear is often no “small thing.” It often is too big for us in our hearts and stifles our witnessing.

What is the solution? Our hearts must be filled daily with a holy reverence and awe for God Almighty, for what he has done for us by “calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9b), and for his marvelous loving grace that will carry us victoriously through this life and into eternity with him. Be very intentional every day about growing in your personal walk with Jesus. “Abide in him and you will bear much fruit.” (John 15:5) In doing so you will be “sanctifying the Lord God in your hearts” rather than being “afraid of their threats or troubled” (1 Peter 3:14-15).

The result? Fear will become a “small thing,” rather than faith. Your faith in the Lord will drown out your fears; the result being you sharing the gospel with others.

September 13
Rev. Matthew Awtrey
Matthew 4:19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

Jesus recruited Peter and his brother Andrew to be his disciples with these simple words. They had spent most of their lives learning how to catch fish. Jesus just took something familiar to them and used it to explain to them how they could join him in his mission.

What is interesting in this passage is that Jesus does not place the burden of becoming fishers of men on the backs on Peter and Andrew. He says four liberating words, "I will make you." Jesus says the only thing they need to do is be close to him, and he will take care of the rest.

As followers of Jesus, our calling is to be fishers of men. However, we must remember that the heavy lifting for this weighty calling is not on us but on him. If you remember anything from this short devotion, remember this: **only your closeness to Jesus will transform you into a fisher of men.**

Peter became one of the greatest fishers of men in history, but it was not because he was the talented or zealous. It was because being with Jesus transformed him.

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Simple. Powerful.

September 14
Rev. Steve Reynolds
Zechariah 4:10

"For who has despised the day of small things?" Zechariah 4:10a NKJV

Why is it that many of us are discouraged about evangelism? Maybe it is because of its immensity. Who are we, that God would use our stumbling words and relationships to effect a complete life-change in someone? Paul rightly says, "who is adequate for these things?" Many of us stop right there. We realize our inadequacy and leave evangelism to the "pros" - those who are natural extroverts with a deep grasp of the Bible.

Nevertheless, guilty feelings linger. We know God calls ALL of us to be involved in the process of reaching others. The Bible provides good news for guilt-ridden non-

evangelists and hopeful gospel-bearers. Small things matter. God uses the “small” efforts of quiet evangelists moved to love others through the Holy Spirit to soften the hardest of hearts. Evangelism is most often a team effort and the smallest of steps toward a sojourner trying to navigate this life without Jesus is huge in God’s eyes.

When the Jews returning from Babylon began to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, their efforts looked puny. However, Zechariah reminds them that those small efforts were essential and would yield results.

God has strategically placed you in the lives of people that need to know Good News. So what “small steps” can you take that God can multiply in reaching someone you know with the gospel? Start with listening - really listening to someone’s story. Then look for opportunities to show God’s love at their point of need. The small things matter!