

Reaching Out with Boldness

Acts 4:13; 14:3

Good morning! Glad to see you once again. After a brief break, we're continuing our series entitled "Reaching Out". In the first message I've shared a month ago, I stated that when we reach out to other people with the goal of introducing Christ to them, we should reach out through kindness. Because it is kindness which breaks people's hearts, right? Even the most callous heart would melt in the face of kindness. And that is when you can make an inroad in that person's life. That's what is called pre-evangelism.

Today, I'd like to talk about being confident and courageous in directly sharing Jesus with others which is otherwise known as evangelism. And that's why I've entitled this message, "Reaching Out with Boldness". Let me read two verses, Acts 4:13 and Acts 14:3:

"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures."

"But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord."

Let us watch this video.

Video – Witnessing

Many of us can identify with that young man. The flesh is willing but the spirit is weak. In the world today, millions of people are going to spend their eternity in hell if we're not quick enough to prevent them from going there. Our minds believe this but somehow our spirits wouldn't cooperate. Thing is, in order to share Jesus with others, we need to muster enough courage to do it. But courage is hard to find, right? Being bold in sharing is something that's not natural to us.

Especially for Filipinos. We're shy, we're quiet, we keep to ourselves. And so, we say, "No, evangelism is not for me. I'm not gifted".

Well, yes, evangelism is a gift. There are gifted evangelists like Billy Graham, Greg Laurie, Luis Palau, and Ray Comfort. These are people who are able to whip up a crowd with their bold declaration of the gospel or because of their creativity and resourcefulness. God gave them the gift of evangelism. But for the rest of us, God gave us a commission. Jesus said to his disciples before he went to heaven, "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." (Matt. 28:19-20a) It's the first verb in that commission we have a problem with – Go. It's just hard to go. It's an action word. But it's hard to act. Truth to tell, we know we have to do it, but we hesitate to do it.

The Bible tells us to always be ready. It says,

"In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. - 1 Peter 3:15. Let me repeat the second sentence. *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

I have no doubt that that statement kind of makes us uncomfortable. You and I know that as soon as someone starts talking about evangelism we begin to shake in our boots and immediately begin to think of reasons not to do it. And one of the great excuses is "I'm not bold enough." But it really doesn't have to be that way - we can learn to have the boldness necessary if we'll just follow some simple guidelines.

I am not saying that it is easy, or that it will always come naturally to us, but if we follow a few guidelines, it will give us the kind of confidence that we need.

This morning, I'd like to share with you these guidelines. What are these? First, to develop boldness, you just

1. SHARE YOUR STORY

Now when I say, "Share Your Story" that is exactly what I mean. Whether you know it or not you already possess the most powerful witnessing tool that God ever invented.

It is not an extravagant evangelistic program, it is not something that takes a lot of training, and it doesn't require memorization. What you have, that no one else has, is the story of how you became a Christian and how God is presently working in your life - That's it!

Your story might not seem that dramatic - you've heard testimonies from former Hell's Angels, and prostitutes, and drug dealers, and maybe your story isn't as exciting. Maybe you attended church all your life, got saved when you were in elementary school and have never really had a "wild period" in your life.

Well, let me tell you something, there are plenty of people that need to hear that. They need to hear that it is possible to come to Christ at a young age and stick with the program throughout life. While I love to hear of God picking people up off the streets and turning their lives around, I also love to hear about those people that have never strayed. The fact of the matter is, it isn't important to the unchurched whether your story is impressive or not, what matters is that you have a story that can help them come into their own relationship with God.

Once, Jesus healed a demon-possessed man and the man begged to go with Jesus on His travels - ***"No, go home to your family, and tell them what wonderful things the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been."*** - Mark 5:19 (NLT)

What was Jesus telling him? Go home and share your story. In the book of Acts, both Peter and Paul over and over again tell their personal story of what Jesus had done for them. Paul was forever telling about his Damascus Road experience while Peter told of the various experiences he had with Jesus.

Now how do you tell your story? You simply tell your friends and loved ones what your life was like before you knew Christ and then what Christ has done for you, and how He is working in your life today. If there is one thing your unchurched friend are looking for, whether they know it yet or not, is the peace and assurance that can only be found in Jesus Christ. When you tell them your story, and that story includes the key to real joy, security, the absence of guilt, and the assurance of a future with a loving God, they will want to hear what you have to say.

If they ask questions and you don't know the answers, you tell them that you don't know but you're willing to find out. You don't have to be a walking theological encyclopedia to tell others your story. I've had people ask me how long they need to be a Christian before they begin telling others about Christ - My answer: About two seconds! Once you've experienced it yourself you are ready to tell others about it.

(Rhoda's story)

Now, sharing your story is one good way of introducing Jesus to your unsaved friends and loved ones. And sharing your story can also be incorporated into any kind of evangelism tool or method that you are familiar with like **Evangelism Explosion, EvangeCube, the Romans Road, Share Jesus without Fear,** and a host of others. Some of you have gone through the trainings we conducted here in the past. This coming August, we'll train you in one more witnessing tool called **Evantell** and, perhaps, a review of a few more, and then you'll see how your story can be more powerful in making Jesus known to others.

So, the first guideline in order to be bold in witnessing is to share your story. Then,

2. LOVE THE UNCHURCHED

True love for the unchurched always precedes the telling of our story. Until I have a heart of compassion, I will not see the necessity of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with other people. The flip side of that is that if I am not sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with other people, it is questionable if I have a heart of compassion at all.

I know that sounds harsh, and I'm not trying to condemn here, but it is beyond my comprehension how we could have the cure for the world's ills and not be willing to share it with the world.

Let's say that somehow, I developed the perfect formula for fighting the covid virus. This treatment was tested in every possible situation, and it worked without fail every time it was administered. No rebounds. I had the formula manufactured and had a large supply of it that I carried around on my person wherever I went. But there was one problem - I decided that I didn't want to share it with anyone.

I would hear of people getting infected but would not do reach out to them. I would receive prayer requests from the church telling me of people who had this dreaded disease, yet I refused to let anyone have the cure.

Now if that story was true, would you say that I loved those people who were dying? Would you say that I had a heart of compassion? Would you say that I was becoming more and more like Jesus Christ with each passing day?

Of course not! You would say that I was the most heartless, cruel, uncaring person that had ever lived if I was unwilling to share the cure.

Now I want you to shake you up a little bit - you and I have the cure for something that is much worse than covid.

We have the cure for the sin that is separating our unchurched friends from God. We have the formula that will change their eternal destiny from one of endless sorrow to one of eternal joy. We have, in our story, in our lives, the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation that is the hope of the world.

And if we truly love the people around us, we will share this cure with them. If we do not, we are no better than the person that refuses to share the cure for covid with those people who are sick and maybe dying.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Cor. 5:18-19

What is God saying? He is saying that it is up to us to tell the story, He’s not going to do it for us - He’s given us the responsibility to share. Now how does this give me a boldness of spirit? By putting into perspective the eternal destiny of people who do not know Jesus Christ. When I begin seeing people in terms of where they will spend their future without end it stirs within me a love that was unknown before. We must cultivate a deeper understanding of “lostness” if we are ever going to love people enough to tell the story.

First, share your story. Second, love the unchurched, and the third guideline is

3. TRUST IN GOD

A TV program preceding the 1998 Winter Olympics featured blind skiers being trained for slalom skiing, as impossible as that might sound. Paired with sighted skiers, the blind skiers were taught on the flats how to make right and left turns. When that was mastered, they were taken to the slalom slope, where their sighted partners skied beside them, shouting “Left!” and “Right!”

As they obeyed the commands, they were able to negotiate the course and cross the finish line, depending solely on the sighted skier's word. It was either complete trust, or catastrophe.

The same is true for us as we work on acquiring the boldness necessary to tell the story of Jesus Christ. Jesus asks us to trust Him as we travel down the mountain - to rely on His presence as we are fulfilling the task He has given to us. God has given us the responsibility to share the story, but He hasn't abandoned us in the telling of it - He is right with us, every step of the way.

After giving the Great Commission to his disciples, Jesus said, *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matt. 28:20b (NIV)

Here Jesus gives us this word of assurance - He will always be with us as we work toward the fulfillment of His Kingdom goals. Listen very carefully, folks. God goes with you and watches over you as you obey his command.

Let me share with you a story narrated by the late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, in his book "How You can Pray with Confidence".

In 1960, the Mau Mau uprising gripped Kenya. During that time, missionaries Matt and Lora Higgens had to drive through hostile territory on their way to Nairobi, well aware that many had met violent deaths at the hands of Mau Mau terrorists in that area. After dark, about 17 miles from Nairobi, the Land Rover they were driving failed. Matt tried in vain to repair the vehicle.

The couple was forced to lock the doors and pray for safety. They awoke safely, repaired the car, and traveled on to Nairobi.

Some days later, they heard an interesting story from an individual who was in contact with terrorist groups: As Matt and Lori had slept that night; three terrorists had come upon them and intended to kill them. Suddenly, though, the terrorists had seen 16 strongmen surrounding the car, and fled in fear!

Matt and Lora were puzzled about the identity of the 16 men-- until they returned to America several weeks later and heard the thrilling testimony of a friend: “On March 23, God burdened my heart for you. I called the men at our church, and SIXTEEN of us met together for emergency prayer on your behalf!”

Now, let’s look at the fourth guideline.

4. ENJOY YOUR REWARD

I got my first real job right when I turned 15. I was a newspaper delivery boy. I took the heap of newspaper over my head and carried them like this and walked around the neighborhood selling them.

At first, the newspapers I carried were just about this thick but as the number of my customers grew, the newspapers became taller and I really had to reach out over the top in order to carry them. And I would go around with one hand on the papers and the other hand pulling a paper to hand it to someone or just throw it over the backyard. It wasn’t a glamorous job but I had to do it. It was school vacation and I had to earn my tuition for the next school year.

Anyway, I would come in at dawn everyday, Monday to Sunday and I would get all the newspapers that my little frame could carry. Rain or shine I was there. I thought that maybe it would stunt my growth but I was there. Sometimes dogs would chase me but I was there. Often my customers wouldn’t pay up when I come back to get their payment but I was there.

It was a hard and tiring job. But I went to work every day and I worked as hard as I could. Why? Because I wanted to get my pay at the end of each round for the day.

Now the fact of the matter is, when you begin to open your eyes to the world of evangelism, you’re not going to enjoy everything you see, and you are not going to like every person that you deal with.

But there is a reward waiting for you that is bigger than anything you have ever dreamed of. The reward is not financial, and it will not position you for worldly success. The reward comes from knowing that you are a part of the team that Jesus is putting together – you are building the kingdom of God, you are part of something much greater than yourself, you are focusing on the one thing that is more important and has greater implications than anything else that is going on in this world.

No matter who you are, or where you've come from, or how much or little education you have, as a worker in the fields of God's harvest, you are significant!

What I need today, and more importantly, what God needs today, are some people – a whole lot of people – that are willing to make the commitment to work in the fields of harvest. **“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” – Matt. 9:37**

So far, we have four guidelines. Share your story. Love the unchurched. Trust in God. Enjoy your reward. And the fifth and final guideline is this.

5. Experience the results.

On his night job at Taco Bell, 17-year-old Nicholas Zenns was taking orders at the drive-thru window. He heard a woman scream, turned, and saw a very pregnant Devorah Anderson standing in front of him.

The high school student pulled off his headset, called the paramedics, and tried to make the woman comfortable - But the baby wouldn't wait.

“The baby's head just popped out into my hands,” Nicholas said. Paramedics finally arrived and took baby and parents to the hospital. Nicholas cleaned up, “sterilized my hands about a thousand times,” and finished his shift.

Nicholas says this event changed his perspective. “Things have been pretty bad in my life lately, and then I got to do this. I'm really glad.”

There is nothing like being a part of bringing new life into the world to change your outlook. I cannot put into words the joy, the satisfaction, the overwhelming sense of being used by God that takes place when the person you've shared your story with makes a decision to follow Jesus Christ.

I've felt it. I'm sure many of you have felt. Sometimes it even brings tears to our eyes. If we've felt that joy and excitement whenever someone comes to Jesus Christ, do you know the angels in heaven do too? Jesus tells us in Luke 15:10, *"There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* I imagine they have a party every time a lost soul becomes a child of God.

Not everyone is going to make that decision; some will reject the message and decide not to follow.

But some will hear your story, will accept Christ as Savior and Lord, and will then have their own story to tell. And when that happens, you'll realize that every time you stumbled and stammered, every time you wondered if God could really use you, every time that you were scared to death to tell the story, it was worth it all.

Someone who would not have been in the Kingdom, now is because you were bold enough to tell them about Jesus Christ.

I hope these guidelines will help you to develop boldness as you do the work that Jesus has commanded us to do. **Guidelines.**

Now I want us to end our time together with a question we each need to answer:

THE BIG QUESTION: AM I WILLING TO BE USED BY GOD?

Am I willing to tell my story, to love the unchurched, to trust God, to experience the results? Am I willing to be bold enough to tell others about Jesus Christ?

What I want you to do right now, is to think about your answer to that question: *Yes* or *No*. Either we are willing, or we are not - there's no middle ground here.

If your answer is "Yes" get ready to be used by using these guidelines we've gone over today. In fact, get ready to be trained because one of these Sundays, as I mentioned, we're going to conduct an evangelism training to help you become bold in sharing Jesus with others. If you marked "No", just reconsider and pray to God to make you willing.