

WALKING THE WALK – Sharing Your Faith

Romans 10:9-15

February 6, 2022

We have spent the month of January with discipleship training – learning to walk the walk and follow Christ as He leads us and guides us on our Christian journey. Discipleship is a life-long journey that takes effort, discipline, and training to move towards godliness and holiness as God renews us day-by-day, taking us from glory-to-glory, to become more-and-more Christ-like, doing what Christ did when He walked this earth and even greater things. As the Apostle Paul writes about this to his young understudy Timothy, *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness (discipleship training) has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance”* (1 Timothy 4:8-9). YES, physical training is valuable to keep us strong and healthy so we can serve the Lord, but discipleship training (constantly moving forward towards godliness and holiness) is even more valuable for us because it not only helps us to serve Christ now, but also prepares us and equips us for eternity. As we follow Jesus’ invitation to *“Come, follow me,”* and grow deeper in this coming year of 2022, let us not neglect to incorporate these essential spiritual exercises and disciplines into our daily lives:

1. Worship and Prayer.
2. The Study of God’s Word.
3. Serving others.
4. Generosity.
5. Sharing our Faith.

Today we’re looking at the fifth and final spiritual discipline – **SHARING OUR FAITH**, the importance of telling our story so that others would be compelled to come to believe, as we are called to replicate ourselves by growing the church, and we do that by making disciples. Everyone loves to listen to a gifted storyteller who draws their audience in, causing them to listen so intently that they are sitting on the edge of their seats in anticipation of the next line of their story. An interesting thing happens whenever we talk passionately about something that we love, enjoy, or find meaningful – others will be drawn in by our passion. We draw others in by our passion for whatever topic we are speaking about, which motivates them to listen and then compels them to take some type of action. Dynamic gifted speakers can motivate people to come along side of them and get involved in a cause, or to open their wallets and give to a cause. That’s why the spoken word is much more

powerful than the written word to motivate and mobilize people to action. Jesus and Paul were those kinds of dynamic individuals, and their audience either loved them or hated them. Those who heard them were never indifferent or bored about what they said. No one walked away from Jesus or Paul unaffected by their message or teaching – some embraced them, and others rejected them. No one sat on the fence!

Today, we once again need that kind of passion for presenting the Gospel message so that people are compelled to make a decision because of our compassion for proclaiming the absolute truth of God’s Word. One day a seminary professor was teaching on a controversial topic from God’s word to his students. After class he made the following remark, *“What a pity! Back in the day when Paul spoke on a controversial topic to his audience, they got highly agitated, they yelled and screamed at Paul and dragged him out of the synagogue, ready to stone him for blasphemy. Today, my greatest challenge is to keep my students awake and engaged!”* After 2000 years, what has happened to our passion for the Gospel Message that it has no effect or very little effect on most of the people we interact with on a daily basis?

Possibly, the church can learn a few lessons from **FedEx** – every day FedEx sends out millions of packages world-wide to valued customers. FedEx’s delivery routes cover all of Canada, and they also service more than 220 countries around the world. In order to do their job well, FedEx has over 170,000 employees, 675 aircrafts, 50,000 ground transportation vehicles, and 1,800 office locations. It’s a bit mysterious, but somehow FedEx has figured out a way for customers to ship packages within a one day turnaround. If FedEx knows anything—they know how to deliver packages well! The church may not be in the package delivery business, but we are in the people delivery business. At least that’s what Jesus wanted the church to be about – delivering the Gospel message to the lost! However, sending people outside of the doors of the church into the community isn’t always the top priority in many churches. As a result, we have done a poor job of winning the lost to Christ!

FedEx has a unique way of looking at the world. FedEx operates with a deep conviction that everyone in the world should have the ability to both send and receive packages in a timely manner. God may not be all too concerned about packages being delivered on time, but the scriptures make it very clear that God

definitely desires everyone to receive the message of salvation and come to the knowledge of the truth. Paul urges his disciple Timothy to pray and make intercession for all people, because – ***“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people”*** (1 Timothy 2:3-6). God operates with the deep conviction that every single person on this earth needs to be given the opportunity to hear the Gospel message and receive the eternal hope of salvation! So, to accomplish God’s will, ***“What is God’s distribution plan to get people saved?”*** Simply put – it’s you and me, God’s people! Which means that the church may need to take a few notes from FedEx’s commitment to send and deliver well, so that we would effectively share and deliver the Gospel message to as many as possible in the time the Lord has given to us, because God’s desire is that all would be saved!

We live in a time when sharing our thoughts, feelings, and reflections on nearly every subject is much easier than at any other time in human history – all because of the internet and the smart phones that we carry with us, social interaction comes with a click of a button. With the click of a button, we can *“like”* something on social media and we can text and tweet instantly from anywhere in the world at any time. And we can also write reviews on Google or Amazon about the products and services we use. In this information age, many search out reviews before they buy anything, or eat out at a restaurant, or read a book, or go to see a movie. We like to see how many *“stars,”* or *“positive ratings”* are attached to whatever we want to purchase, watch, read, or consume, before we make a decision.

So today, much like in the time of the early church of the first century, the most effective and powerful form of advertising and getting your message across to others continues to be word-of-mouth through our interactions with others. During the first century the written word was not accessible to the average person, so people heard about the Christian faith from others, who had heard the Gospel message from others, and so-on, and so-on, and by hearing, they came to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, sent to die for their sins and give them eternal life. So, as the early Apostles and disciples, who had spent time with Jesus and experienced His resurrection went about telling their stories, and teaching what Jesus’ taught, proclaiming the salvation message, the result was that the Christian faith grew and expanded exponentially as both Jews and Gentiles were cut to the

heart, repented of their sins and came to faith. And it was all because of the effective and powerful tool of word-of-mouth from passionate followers who went about boldly and fearlessly shared their stories of faith to anyone who would listen!

Because of the internet and mass communications this world has become a much smaller place, so it should be much easier to share our faith with more people than ever before, but most believers are reluctant and hesitant to do so. I believe the reason is because many of those outside of our doors are skeptical and suspicious of our faith, largely because of all the bad press they have received over the last few decades; thereby, resistant to the Gospel message, and who can blame them. People today are turned-off by “*organized religion*” because of the negative words they hear that they believe describes today’s church; words such as: “*hypocrites,*” “*judgmental,*” “*anti-gay,*” “*anti-science,*” “*anti-evolution,*” “*hateful,*” “*archaic – dated – behind the times,*” “*simple minded.*” So, the church hasn’t done a very good job of promoting Christ’s message of unconditional love and grace, as most of the messages proclaimed outside of our doors, don’t reflect the teaching of Jesus, and don’t accurately describe and represent the church that Jesus established. Our churches are shrinking and failing partly because of the bad press from a few highly vocal bad actors who are exhibiting un-Christ like behavior and speaking hate instead of love. And then those true disciples of the faith are not getting out there as they should, defending the faith and setting things straight by telling the truth, telling the correct Christian story of God’s love, mercy and grace!

None of us are perfect in how we live out our faith – we all struggle and make mistakes, we all say the wrong things and our actions are often un-Christ-like, plus we all get deceived in one way or another, but that is part of our faith journey. That’s why we gather together as a church Sunday mornings, and during the rest of the week, to help and encourage each other as we struggle with our faith, and often get beat up by the world outside of our doors, and at times even within our doors. The church also gathers to learn God’s Word so that we would be better equipped to share our faith, because every believer is commissioned by Jesus to share their faith in such a way that others would be drawn to Christ. That’s because God’s desire is that everyone would be saved, and everyone would come to call upon the name of the Lord, and that’s where every believer comes into the picture. Our calling to share our faith is what the Apostle Paul was referring to in **Romans 10:14-15**, “*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can*

they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written (Isaiah 52:7): “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” Word-of-mouth brings people to the place where they become convicted and will come to the realization that they need the Lord in their lives. Today, we live in a wonderful time, because you can hear the Gospel message not only in churches, but in the comfort of your home on radio, television, and over the internet, but in every one of these methods, someone still has to deliver the Gospel message through the spoken word!

Many great organizations, like the Gideon’s, the Bible League, and the Canadian Bible society distribute the Scriptures around the world – but I don’t believe that is sufficient to win unbelievers to Christ. YES, distributing Bibles is an important ministry to bring God’s Word into the hands of people, but they also need to hear God’s Word spoken or preached to have the greatest impact, and that’s why the church keeps sending missionaries into the mission field, even though we have all these advances in technology. Our human presence in the flesh that can be touched and the human voice that can be heard, are still critical to getting people saved. We can’t underestimate the importance of personal touch!

One day, Jesus sends out seventy-two of His followers, two-by-two with these words, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field”* (Luke 10:2). As they went, Jesus warned them that some will not accept them, and when that happens, don’t take it personally – you will not be held accountable, just wipe the dirt off your feet and keep going, because – *“Whoever listens to you listens to me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me”* (verse 16) – they have rejected God, not you. And when the seventy-two returned, they were filled with joy, reporting to Jesus. *“Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name”* (verse 17). We will not always be successful, but that must not stop us from going. We go in faith and leave the results with God!

God calls men and women to bring the Gospel to the far reaches of this earth, and that’s why Paul, in his letter to the Romans quotes from Isaiah 52:7, *“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* Our feet are definitely not the most beautiful part of the body, but they become beautiful when God sends someone and they walk into our lives to free us from the bondage of sin, transforming our lives, and giving us the hope of eternal life. We never forget the

ones God sent to us (those beautiful feet) who brought us the Gospel message. We can all think of the person who first shared with us the Gospel message. For me it was Rev. Lane Douglas who was my pastor back in the late 1970's and early 1980's in the Dresden United Church, and every time I visit Lane at Fairfield Park nursing home, I always tell him how grateful I am that God brought him into my life!

It's puzzling how a person can go to church their entire life, thinking they are a good person, hoping they will make it into heaven one day, hoping their good works will outweigh their bad works, but never take that necessary step to accept Jesus as their Lord; thereby, having that confidence and assurance of eternal life. And then, it's also puzzling how some people seem to be so suspicious, and so self-reliant, that even when the good news comes to them, it falls on deaf ears, they're not interested and don't receive it. This is nothing new, it seems to be part of our human nature to mistrust God and mistrust others. God sent prophet-after-prophet to His chosen people, Israel, to get their attention, so they would turn from their idolatry and wicked ways, but it fell on deaf ears. So, God had no choice but to take His hand of protection off His chosen people, Israel, and allow their enemies to defeat them and take them into captivity for seventy years. Then hundreds of years later many of the Jews missed their Messiah, and unfortunately, people continue to miss the Messiah today. Satan continues to deafen this world to the Gospel message, but that's where the true believer walks into the picture, who is passionate about their faith!

The Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians called the person who brings others the Good News of the Gospel "*Christ's Ambassador.*" We are Christ's diplomatic agents of the highest rank sent to represent King Jesus and authorized to speak on His behalf. We are the voice of Heaven on this earth, invested with power through the powerful Name of Jesus and the authority of His blood. Paul calls us Ambassadors of Christ for these reasons, according to **2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**:

- Because we know what it means to fear the Lord – we stand in awe of the Lord, making it our passion to persuade others to turn to Him.
- Christ's love compels us – fueling our passion, because we are convinced that He has given His life for all of us, so we should no longer live self-absorbed lives but lives that are poured out for Him.

- We no longer look at others as the world looks at them – we don't judge, criticize, avoid them, or condemn those around us, but see everyone as a child of God, who deserves dignity, has value, and are worthy of our love.
- God has made all things new and reconciled us to Himself and given us the ministry of reconciling others back to God.
- We see ourselves as God's co-workers – ambassadors of the Anointed One who carry the message of Christ to the world, the beautiful feet who bring good news.

When Jesus began His ministry – His first disciples were fishermen, and Jesus called them to leave their nets and follow Him, becoming fishers of men, and that's still His calling upon those of us that call ourselves Christ followers today. Once we accept His call to follow, we are commissioned to go out fishing for those that are lost. And as we go, we are to have the same heart for the spiritually lost and those that are going through illness and difficulties as Jesus had, as recorded for us by **Matthew 9:35-36**, ***“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming 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.”*** Jesus had compassion on those who were disconnected from God suffering through demonic influence, sickness, oppression, poverty and especially had compassion on those sinners and tax collectors who everyone avoided. For example: Luke's Gospel tells us the story of Zacchaeus, the short tax collector of Jericho who climbed a tree to get a better glimpse of Jesus as He passed by. Jesus stops and notices Zacchaeus and then does something no religious Jewish Rabbi would never-ever do, go to this tax collector's home for a meal. Well, Zacchaeus was so blown away by this act of compassion and grace towards him that he was instantly transformed from his sinful ways and vowed to make things right with all of those he had cheated by paying them back four times the amount. To which Jesus declared, ***“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 the lost”*** (Luke 19:9-10). Jesus noticed and took time for those who were invisible to the Jewish Pharisees, priests, and teachers of the Law. Jesus had compassion for those who were spiritually lost, and He calls us to do the same, to notice those who believe that God has forsaken and who believe God could never love them!

Before Jesus left this earth He commissioned His followers – to follow His example, by going out into the world and making more disciples, teaching others the things He had taught them, so that Christ’s work would continue generation-after-generation-after-generation, until His return. But we don’t have to do this alone, because Jesus promised His followers a spiritual helper so they wouldn’t have to share their faith in their own strength. We read this promise in **Acts 1:8**, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** And that commissioning and spiritual help still stands today, as was first given by our Lord 2000 years ago, He continues to gift us with the Holy Spirit. So, as we go out in the world, we never go alone, never go in our own strength to witness, because the Holy Spirit goes with us and empowers us!

It’s often surprising to most church goers, to realize how little un-churched people think about them. In the average un-believer may drive by or walk by a church building numerous times during the week, and never wonder or care about what happens inside, or think about coming to attend one of their worship services or attend one of their functions. And as our culture becomes more-and-more secular, the church will become more-and-more invisible to those living within the community unless we start demonstrating the power of the Gospel in ways that will get their attention!

What leads the un-churched to take notice of a church is when that church and its members genuinely love them and care about them and are actively engaged in seeking to have a positive impact on their community. Others will notice when churches serve others selflessly, give generously, and love others in radical selfless ways. This is what Jesus had in mind when He told His disciples, ***“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:13-16). We are called to be salt giving flavour to life! We are called to be light that shines brightly where we live and where we worship, so that others will know we are a follower of Christ, because of the effect we have on the darkness around us. Jesus warned us that if you’re salt loses its flavour, and if you are not shining your light, then people will continue to be lost, without hope and living in darkness, and you and the church will remain invisible to those around you. Our goals should be to become highly visible to those around us!

Walking with Christ – then includes being part of a congregation that is seeking to be the visible body of Christ first within their community and then to the rest of the world, continuing the ministry that Jesus started when He walked this earth: reaching out to the broken, searching for the lost, announcing the good news of the Kingdom to whoever will listen, seeking daily to be flavourful salt and shining Christ’s light into the lives of others, along with healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead, according to Jesus’ command found in **Matthew 10:7-8**, “*As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.’*” These verses challenge me every time I read them!

These verses remind me that the role of every church is to use the authority we have been given against Satan and his demonic realm to push back the darkness by helping bring an end to the suffering, pain, loneliness, injustice, poverty, sickness, and demonic oppression around us. We operate on the offensive and attack the enemy head-on and defeat him, whenever he raises his ugly head. And then Apostle Peter’s first letter to us tells us that we always need to be ready to share our faith, “*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 3:15-16). We can only be ready when we are equipped and vigilant of the enemy and his tactics!

So, how would you answer the question when asked: “*Why are you a Christian, and what difference does it make in your life and in the lives of those around you?*” Following Jesus as His disciple should change how you treat others, how you think, what you believe, and how you spend your time and your money – literally, everything in your life must be shaped by your faith in Christ, and it must be very evident and noticeable to those around you as a true disciple of Christ, His Ambassador right where He has placed you!

I want to close with Jesus’ last words to His disciples in **Mark 16:15-20**, giving them very specific instructions on how to be His representatives as they share their faith – “*As you go into all the world, preach openly the wonderful news of the gospel to the entire human race! Whoever believes the good news and is baptized will be saved, and whoever does not believe the good news will be condemned. And these miraculous signs will accompany those who believe:*

They will drive out demons in the power of my name. They will speak in tongues. They will be supernaturally protected from snakes and from drinking anything poisonous. And they will lay hands on the sick and heal them.”