



intentional evangelism initiative



BEGIN WITH PRAYER



LISTEN WITH CARE



EAT TOGETHER



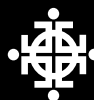
SERVE WITH LOVE



SHARE YOUR STORY

SERMON SAMPLES

Resources to help your church engage BLESS



The Evangelical Covenant Church

MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES

COVCHURCH.ORG/BLESS



BLESS Sermon Samples

Resources to help your church engage in a six-week sermon series on BLESS

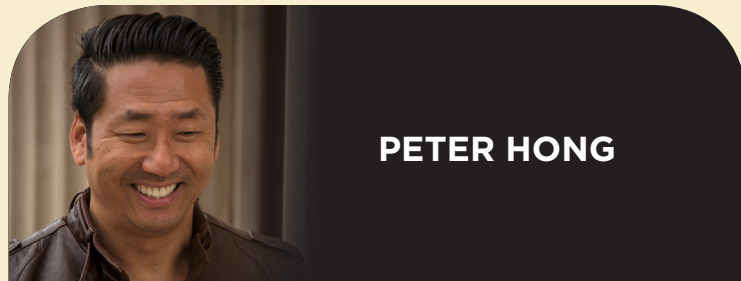
THE FIVE BLESS MISSIONAL PRACTICES

1. **Begin with prayer.** Jesus and others have blessed you through prayer. We can bless others who don't know Jesus yet by praying for them.
2. **Listen with care.** Jesus and others have listened to you and heard you. We can bless others who are far from God by listening to and hearing them.
3. **Eat together.** Jesus and others have accepted you and invited you to their table. Let us accept and invite others who don't know Jesus yet to our table.
4. **Serve in love.** Jesus and others have served you in ways that changed you. We can serve others who do not know God in ways that can change them.
5. **Share your story.** Jesus and others have shared their story with you in ways that have changed you. We can share your story with others so that they may draw near to God.



Introducing BLESS

JOHN 17:13-21



Lead Pastor, New Community Covenant Church—Logan Square, Chicago, IL

Since arriving in the U.S. at the age of ten, Peter has lived most of his life in Chicago, which he considers “the greatest city in the world.” He earned a master’s of divinity and a master’s of theology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. His passions include preaching Jesus as the goal of all of life, planting multicultural churches in major urban city centers, and pastoring kingdom missionaries who will make Jesus known to the ends of the earth. When he’s not in his office, you will most likely find him hanging out at a local coffee shop reading, studying, meeting new people, and, yes, drinking a beverage.

Introduction

In the final hours of his life, almost the last moments of his life, Jesus prays to his Father. This is the longest prayer we hear Jesus pray in the Bible. We're given a glimpse into his soul and his heart as he prays for his disciples.

In this prayer we notice that there's something Jesus really wants for them—and for us! It's in verse 13: "I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves." What Jesus wants can get a bit lost in translation. Literally the Greek text says, "So that they may have the pleroma of my joy." What Jesus wants for his disciples (and for us) is a pleroma, a fullness, of joy. The difference between a pleroma of joy and any old regular joy is the difference between a well and a cup of water. Jesus prays that his disciples, including you and me, would experience his pleroma of joy.

How do we do this? The answer might surprise you. In order to give us this fullness of joy, Jesus sends us out in mission. He says so in verse 18: "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." What we're being told here is simple, yet powerful. Jesus is saying, "I am filled with joy because I'm a man on mission! And I want you to have the same fullness of joy. So I'm going to send you out in mission!"

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

(JOHN 17:13-21)

But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Three Points with Illustrations

① JOY AND MISSION ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED

Why do our lives lack joy and a sense of purpose? It might be because we've been living for ourselves, because we have no higher mission. We focus on getting a nicer apartment or finding Mr. or Ms. Right. But we need to give up our small ambitions. Our hearts and our souls were made for nobler things. We were made for mission!

What does it mean to be "on mission"? You're on mission when your comfort, your convenience, and your security come second to a larger cause. You're on mission when someone or something is more important than just your happiness and your needs. You're on mission when you live for a cause more important than yourself, when you're willing to sacrifice everything—your comfort, your convenience, even your security—to make a difference in the world. When you do that, doesn't something come alive in you?

Of course, there is nothing wrong with having a good career, a nice home, and a great spouse. But if you live only for those things, you're not looking beyond your own needs and desires. If that is your main goal in life, when you get there, there will be an emptiness in your life. If the primary aim of your life is to be happy, you will never be happy. If you are the most significant thing in your life, you will, paradoxically, feel more and more insignificant.

We are most alive when we're living for something greater than ourselves. Of course, that's hard work, and it entails sacrifice. But when we give ourselves to a cause or a purpose greater than us, it changes us. It lights up something deep within us and we begin to feel alive again.

A life of mission isn't easy. In John 17:14-16, Jesus doesn't mince words as he explains this. Jesus doesn't send us out to the convenient places with a cushy mission. We're sent to dangerous places. Jesus sends us to hopeless and helpless places to bring hope. He sends us to broken parts of the world, where people are hurting and struggling. And Jesus has the audacity to say that it's in order that, in sharing joy with others, our joy may be full! This is the upside-down pattern of life in the kingdom of God.

You were built for mission. Being on mission, spreading God's love and joy with the world, allows us to experience joy.

② JESUS SAVES US FOR MISSION

When Jesus saves you, you're not just saved from something. You're saved for something. If you think that Christianity is a private matter between you and God, you haven't encountered the God of Scripture who simultaneously calls you radically into a new community, worldview, and way of life—and sends you radically out to share the good news with the world. It is in God's very nature to send us out. We see this pattern all over Scripture.

For example, let's take a look at Isaiah's call narrative. The prophet sees God in the Temple, high and lifted up, majestic, holy—and he's terrified. Isaiah says, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5). Then a seraph takes a live coal from the altar, puts it on the lips of Isaiah, and he is forgiven.

Immediately God asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah responds: "Here am I; send me!" Not only is Isaiah healed and forgiven, but God immediately sends him on a mission.

Another prime example is found in Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God blesses us so that we may bless others. But this isn't always an easy call. God called Abraham to leave that which was familiar, that which was comfortable, that which was convenient. Living on mission is rarely comfortable or convenient. Loving people well is never painless. It often entails risk and sacrifice.

But this is how we bless others—following in Jesus's footsteps. Jesus says this in his prayer: "Just as you sent me into the world, so I send them." Just as Jesus emptied himself, leaving the glory of heaven, making himself a servant, and ultimately giving his life, so Jesus sends us out into the world to do the same.

③ JESUS CALLS US TO JOIN GOD'S WORK

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul writes: "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (2:10). God is already at work in the world despite our weaknesses, and we are called, by God's grace, to join in that work. In all that you do, remember that God is already at work!

Being on mission is not an optional call, nor is it just for the select few. Mission is the very essence of being a follower of God! At a time when so many churches are concerned about how to get more people into the church, let us be kingdom people who are more concerned about how to share God's love with the world. But we don't necessarily need to start across the world—we can go across the street. We can start on mission where we live. Ministry begins in your neighborhood, then the city, then the world. Do you know those on your block? Do they know about Jesus through you? What about your coworkers? Do they know that you are a follower of Jesus? Do you know those on your dorm floor? Do they see the light of Jesus in and through you? What about the coffee shops you frequent? The gym? Your favorite restaurants? Start there.

Introduce BLESS

Over the course of the next five weeks we will be exploring the BLESS initiative together. This is an acronym that stands for:



As we consider each of these facets of mission together, I pray that, as individuals and as a community, we may discern how we are called and challenged to share God's love and joy with the world.

Conclusion

The church doesn't exist just for you. We are the church existing for the world. And it's important to remember that the Holy Spirit is central to this work. Effective witness is only made possible through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Our mission, by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, is to equip followers of Christ for God's mission and walk with each other along the way.



intentional evangelism initiative



JOHN 3:3-21



**Mauricio Dell'Arciprete, Pastor,
New Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN**

Mauricio was born in Argentina, and came to the United States when he was 26. From an early age he was interested in music, and became involved in worship ministries. After graduating from Conservatorio Schnabel in Uruguay, he pursued music composition at University of Quilmes. He also studied at Facultad Internacional de Estudios Teológicos and Berean Bible School, and is currently a student at North Park University. Mauricio has served on the pastoral staff of several churches. In 2014 he was called to plant New Covenant Church, a multicultural and bilingual church in Minneapolis. Mauricio lives in Minneapolis with his wife, Jacquelyn, and his two daughters.

Introduction

Sometimes it feels like we're stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. We can't move anywhere, but time continues to pass. There are so many barriers and walls, and we can't figure out how to get out. Maybe we're held back by fear, obstacles, preconceptions, or spiritual barriers. Other times we don't move because we need guidance from someone who can help us discern our next steps.

Community is central to the Christian life. As believers we are connected to the church because we need each other. In the body of Christ we are all connected to one another. This week we are talking about sharing the love of Christ with others by beginning with prayer.

Nicodemus and Jesus (JOHN 3:3-21)

Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.



For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Three Points with Illustrations

In Genesis God calls Abraham and makes him a promise: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (12:2). In this text we see that **God’s desire is to bless us**. However, it doesn’t end there; **God’s desire is also that we be a blessing to others**. The question we must ask is, how can we do that?

BLESS consists of five missional practices that help us understand how we can bless others. This week we Begin with Prayer.

① WHY WE MUST ALWAYS BEGIN WITH PRAYER

In our congregation at New Covenant Church in Minneapolis we’ve been talking about immigration and how to understand the needs and experiences of our immigrant community. We see how communities are experiencing confusion and discussing together what is the best immigration policy. As individuals and as a congregation, we are called to be bridge-builders, coming with God’s truth and sharing God’s truth with love. In today’s climate it often seems like the world has forgotten how to have respectful conversations and meaningful debates when people have very different points of view. But we are called to be peacemakers.

In everything we do, from peacemaking to sharing the good news, we must begin with prayer.

Think of those who are around you who don’t have a relationship with Jesus. There are people around us whom we need to invite and welcome into the life of the church. We shouldn’t go on with our lives without paying attention to them.

② PEOPLE ALL AROUND US ARE SEEKING JESUS

About a week ago one of our pastors organized a treasure hunt for the youth group. On the first run, he gave them five minutes to find the treasure, but they weren’t successful. On the second run, they were given two hints (one true and the other false) and three more minutes, but they still couldn’t find it. On the third and final run, the pastor revealed the false hint and replaced it with a truthful one. Within one minute, the youth group found the treasure! Only afterward did the pastor reveal that two of the students knew where the treasure was but couldn’t say so.

Many people are looking for Jesus, but they sometimes receive false hints. They’ll hear that Jesus is only in one particular place or one particular church, but God is so much bigger than that. On the other



hand, so many of us who know Jesus stay silent. How would someone feel if they were finally in the presence of God and discovered that their neighbor knew God but never told them about him? How different would your life be if the person who invited you to church had never invited you?

Research indicates that that **seven out of ten people would go to church if someone invited them.** Yet too often we do not invite the people in our spheres of influence to join us in the life-giving worship of God. We can develop great ad campaigns on Twitter and Facebook, but there's something especially meaningful about face-to-face invitations. That's what Jesus did—he invited people face-to-face and personally.

③ THE SPIRIT HELPS US OVERCOME OUR FEAR

How do we do this? We begin with prayer for ourselves and for all people of the world. As we listen to the Holy Spirit, we add names to our list and pray for them.

Sometimes the thought of talking to others about God leads to fear, hesitation, and lack of confidence. We question whether we can speak eloquently enough and whether we know the correct Bible passages.

But Jesus knew and understood this. That's why he told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to them and that they needed to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The disciples were terrified—Jesus had just been crucified and they just knew they were next. The disciples were so afraid to talk about Jesus. But then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they went out and shared the good news!

This is why it's so important to begin with prayer. **If you are afraid to talk about Jesus with others, it is time to ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance and fulfillment,** that we may share God's love without fear and worry. Listing names of neighbors, friends, family members, coworkers, and those who are around you, we are called not only to pray for them, but to eat with them, talk to them, serve and help them, and share the gospel with them.

Conclusion

Every morning when we wake up, let us ask God how we can share God's love with our neighbors. Starting tomorrow, I invite you to ask yourself, Who am I going to bless today? Who am I going to pray for, talk with, eat with, serve, and talk to about Jesus?

Do not get discouraged if someone you share with does not become engaged in the conversation or is hesitant. It is beautiful when someone commits their life to Christ, but it does not always happen quickly. Just having the conversation with you will bring that person one step closer to Jesus. And as more people share about Jesus, that will lead them closer to God, step by step.

Our task is to sow the seed, but the result of the sowing—the fruit, the harvest—depends on God.





intentional evangelism initiative



ACTS 8:26-40



BETH SEVERSEN

**Beth Seversen, Director of Evangelism,
the Evangelical Covenant Church**

Beth previously served as associate pastor at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, and at Hillcrest Evangelical Covenant in Prairie Village, Kansas. She and her husband, Mark, served as church planters and worked in campus ministry with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Beth recently earned her doctorate in intercultural studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Her research is on Covenant churches reaching and incorporating emerging adults. Her passion is motivating graduate and undergraduate students, to hang out with people who are far from God, helping them take steps toward commitment to faith in Jesus.

Introduction

We know that God has always sought to reach and restore the world through blessing. Since the time of Abraham, God has blessed his people so that we might bless those who do not know him.

I have spent the past few years researching Covenant churches that are reaching millennials—the dones (church dropouts) and the nones (those who identify as having no religious affiliation). That’s my passion—how do we reach people who have no church background and help them find faith in Jesus credible? And how do we reach people who are disillusioned with church or just don’t find it relevant?

BLESS comes out of some of that research of listening to what young adults tell us about how churches are effectively reaching Gen Z and millennials who are far from God. The BLESS initiative helps us to follow Jesus in his mission to reach the lost and restore the hurting. Its focus isn’t on downloading information or memorizing scripts but on equipping us to love our neighbors well with the hope of introducing them to Jesus. It helps us get “unstuck” and reach out more naturally.

The five missional practices of BLESS—natural things we do every day—help us bless people whom we sense don’t know God. **This week we are focusing on the second practice of listening with care.**

Here’s the framework for my message today: We want to listen to God on behalf of people, asking God, where have you sent me? Whom have you sent me to? How do you want me to pray for them? How do you want me to bless them? We also want to listen to how God is at work in the lives of those we meet. Where is God working in this person’s life? How can I come alongside them and collaborate with the Holy Spirit? We do this by asking good questions, listening well, and deepening our relationships.

We will elaborate on this framework through the context of today’s Scripture, which tells the story of the relationship between Philip and an Ethiopian man.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

(ACTS 8:26-40)

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do





you understand what you are reading?” He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

*“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”*

The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Five Points with Illustrations

① GOD PREPARES US TO BLESS PEOPLE

How has God prepared you to bless people? What are the experiences and struggles in your life that God will use to bless others?

The first point I want to make is that Philip was prepared to bless the Ethiopian eunuch and to introduce him to Jesus. And God prepares us to bless people too.

How was Philip prepared to bless the Ethiopian? Let’s take a look at his background. The early church was rapidly growing and diversifying as more Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles joined the community. The disciples were unable to keep up with the demands of leading such a large group. So they chose seven Greek-speaking individuals to help them with administration and pastoral care.

One of the five was Philip. He was of a different cultural background, a Greek Jew in a culture of Hebrew Jews, but his ministry was so impactful that he became known as an evangelist.

Philip’s cross-cultural experiences and skills are foundational in this passage, where God uses Philip to reach across cultural and class divides to connect with an Ethiopian eunuch and translate the gospel for him.



God prepared Philip for this work through his background and experiences.

As we discern our part in God's mission to bless the world, one of the first things to consider is how God has wired us. What unique experiences has God given you? To whom do you uniquely feel drawn? With whom do you identify? What do you love to do? What are your interests? God wants to use all of these things to bless others.

Philip was a minority person in this new church, and he reached out to a eunuch from another culture, another kingdom. This man faced his own issues of struggle and needed to hear the good news, and Philip knew some of what it was like to be at the margins. He was prepared by God to bless the Ethiopian.

Like Philip, each of us has been prepared by God to bless others. And here's what's really cool about the gospel: sometimes our worst stuff is our best stuff. Sometimes our brokenness is what God uses to reach people and to transform them.

PASTOR: Share an illustration of how God took something in your life that was painful, embarrassing, or a mistake and redeemed and used it to help someone come to faith in Christ.

② GOD NUDGES US TO BLESS PEOPLE, AND GOD PREPARES PEOPLE TO BE BLESSED BY US

How is God connecting you with others and encouraging you to bless them?

For blessing people to be truly fruitful and transformative, we learn to listen to God and respond to God's nudges. That is what Philip does in this passage. He listens for the Holy Spirit and when the Spirit nudges him, he responds. God whispers to Philip to go south, and he does! Then God leads him to a particular road and to a particular man in his chariot, and Philip follows.

Not only does God nudge us; God also prepares people to be blessed by us. We do not do it alone. Rather, we collaborate with the Holy Spirit—and we listen!

Often the Spirit's nudges come in the ways God opens our hearts to people around us. He opens our eyes to see their needs and encourages us to respond accordingly.

But sometimes those nudges come in the form of interruptions. Philip was certainly interrupted. It takes a willingness to lean into what God is doing and an openness to be nudged and respond. Susanna Wesley provides an excellent example of this in her diary: "I long to awake every morning and to ask God to help me see the interruptions of my day as the primary work of God for that day."

So what do those interruptions look like? Often that happens within the context of our developing and deepening relationships. God interrupts

our daily routines and encourages us beyond our comfort zone. **So let this be our posture in life: Lord, interrupt me! When we respond positively, we find that God prepares people to be blessed by us.**

PASTOR: Give an illustration from your life of being interrupted by God to bless someone far from him.

③ GOD WANTS US TO COME ALONGSIDE AND BE WITH PEOPLE

Where has God sent you? How do you intentionally take the opportunities to deepen relationships with the people in your spheres of connection?

The third part of listening to people with care is that we are called to go be with people! When we follow this call and listen well, we notice where God is at work in their lives.

Philip did this. He saw the Ethiopian eunuch reading and asked him about his book. On the one hand, Philip is responding to something obvious, but he is also discovering where God is already at work in this man's life. The man doesn't understand what he is reading; he is confused, but he wants to understand.

But Philip doesn't immediately respond with answers. He comes alongside the Ethiopian man, talks with him, finds out where God is already at work, and then speaks to that place in this man's life. That's our role too—to ask God, "Where are you already at work, and what are the questions this person already has? How can I join you? How can I bless this person?"

One emerging adult I interviewed had not grown up in church and had never even visited a church. When his mother was in high school, she became pregnant with him and the church excluded her. So the message he received about church was, "You're not welcome here. You're not wanted here." That church marginalized him.

But then a Covenant congregation wrote a new script for him. They were inclusive, they were inviting, and their culture was invitational—it felt like home, and he found friends and value there. Other young people came alongside him and invited him to join them in community—they shared meals together, they went camping together, they played on a sports team together, and then they invited him to their small group. His curiosity grew so much that he asked his friend if she would take him to her church service.

When we ask questions and listen with care, we can focus on where God is at work and help people take the next step. By responding compassionately to a need we see or learn about, empathizing with the ways our neighbors have been hurt, and, if appropriate, walking with them through spiritual questions as Philip does with the Ethiopian eunuch, we can welcome them into our lives and communities.



④ PAY ATTENTION TO PEOPLE'S DREAMS AND PAIN. LISTEN FOR EVIDENCE OF GOD'S WORK IN THEIR LIVES.

Look for ways to identify with their pain.

Philip asked questions. He listened, discovered where God was at work, and engaged the truth about Jesus that this man longed for.

We need to follow Philip's example. After we discover where God is at work in people's lives, then we look for ways to identify with them by listening to their dreams and to their pain. This listening, in turn, informs our actions and our prayers.

One morning at my \$10-a-month gym I headed toward the Stairmaster and noticed a woman around my age working out on a machine that was new to me. I climbed onto the machine next to her and asked if she would help me select my settings. We talked for a few minutes and then I asked Shea (not her real name) about her personal workout for that morning. Her plan was intriguing, so I asked if I could join her as I would enjoy learning some new things and also getting to know her. She agreed, though we both noted that we needed to be done right at 8:00 a.m.

Shea and I chatted as we made our way around the weight machines, and then we headed for the mat room to begin our crunches. At one point, I looked over at her and said, "Hey, Shea, what are you looking forward to in your life?" She was quiet for a moment, her mood sobered, and then she responded, "Peace." It was three minutes to 8:00, and I knew we both needed to head out the door, but I felt that nudge, maybe even heard that whisper, "Ask her what she means." I took a deep breath and said, "Peace? Unpack that for me a bit."

Shea went on to tell me that five years earlier as a single mom with three young adult boys, she had started to date a really nice guy. They had been going out for five or six weeks when he began to drop things. Then he backed his car into the closed garage door. Within months her friend had lost all his motor skills and then his cognitive functions. He lost his job, his house, and his kids. Shea and her sons talked about it, and they made a decision to take this man in and look after him. They invited him into their home, and for the past five years Shea had fed and cared for this man every day before she left for work. At the end of each day, she came home, fed him supper, and helped get him into bed.

Then on a recent checkup the physician had told Shea that her friend's need for care had gone beyond her abilities. He needed to be admitted to a facility that provided twenty-four-hour care. So for the past month, Shea had left the gym each morning to have breakfast with her friend before running to work. Each evening she stopped back in to see him. "We hardly had time to get to know one another before he became ill," she said.

Shea wept as she concluded her story. There on the gym floor we hugged each other, and I asked if I could pray for her. She nodded. After listening to her story, I prayed what I believe God's Spirit whispered to my



heart—that she might know how pleased the Father was with her decisions and with the sacrifices she and her boys had made to care for a stranger.

When I asked Shea about her dreams—what was she longing for—she responded by sharing about her pain. Good questions can help us get to what’s going on under the surface.

⑤ BLESS PEOPLE SO THEY CAN BLESS OTHERS

How can you encourage people you have blessed to go and do likewise?

This is our mission—making disciples that multiply and make disciples!

After ministering to and walking with the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip followed up. He didn’t just share his two cents and disappear. He baptized the man and sent him on his way to be a witness and to engage with others.

Philip had this reproducing kind of ministry. You see it with this Ethiopian eunuch, and also with his own daughters, who all became prophets. Philip had spiritual children, who led others to Jesus and had their own spiritual children.

Fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives also has to do with reproducing. We are called to help other people get on fire and go away equipped and strengthened and full of the Holy Spirit.

What an amazing picture of the BLESS strategy this is!

Conclusion

As we listen with care, let us follow Philip’s example. Let us listen to God’s nudges and walk alongside the brothers and sisters to whom God leads us. Let us listen to their dreams and pain, discovering where God is at work in their lives. And let us invite them into our communities. We are blessed so that we can bless the world by loving the lost and restoring the broken.

Take some time this week and ask God to interrupt your life. As you go through your week, listen to God as you interact with others. Expect an interruption and embrace it when it comes.

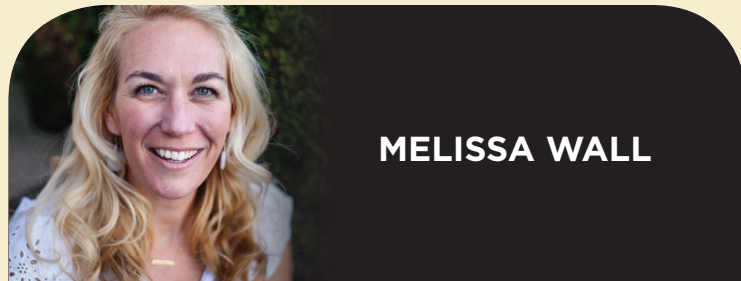




intentional evangelism initiative



LUKE 19:1-10 and PSALM 71:14-15



**Melissa Wall, Lead Pastor, Deergrove
Covenant Church, Palatine, IL**

Melissa has served as pastor of DeerGrove Covenant Church for nearly fourteen years. She has a passion for leading new and creative ways for people to fall in love with Jesus. Her congregation often says that she really leads three congregations: DeerGrove, her Starbucks community, and the podcast community. On any given week you will find her pulling up a chair to answer theological questions over coffee, living adventures with her husband, Fredrik, and their two boys, and serving alongside her incredible team at DeerGrove to foster a place for kids, youth, and adults to experience Jesus.

Week 4:

Introduction

We are currently in the midst of our sermon series exploring the Evangelical Covenant Church's BLESS initiative. **This week we enter my favorite part of the series: Eat together.** Today's Scripture revolves around eating together and its role in discipleship as Jesus invites himself over to dinner.

Please join me in a moment of prayerful meditation:

"Jesus, how can I bless your world today?"

Jesus and Zacchaeus

(LUKE 19:1-10)

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Prayer for Protection and Hope

(PSALM 71:14-15)

*But I will hope continually,
and will praise you yet more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.*



Three Points with Illustrations

Don and Hank hadn't seen each other for more than twenty years, and now they found themselves standing face to face. It was the most improbable of scenarios—both were attending an event neither had been invited to—but they took advantage of the opportunity and began catching up on lost time, filling in the gaps since their childhood friendship began.

Two weeks later they ran into each other again. “This is crazy,” Hank said. “Two times in two weeks?” They caught up again, going a little deeper than before.

Then Hank said to Don, “I'd love to keep in touch—would you like to come to my house for a Bible study?”

“No way,” Don answered. “I am not doing that.” So Hank tried a different approach. “Well, I know you used to love food. Are you still a foodie?” Don didn't even need to answer—his expression gave him away.

“My wife makes an amazing dinner before the Bible study,” Hank said. “Why don't you come over to our house for dinner. Then you can stay or leave—whichever you prefer.”

The next week Don pulled into Hank's driveway for the first time. He stayed to eat dinner and then he left. The next week he stayed a little longer after dinner. Eventually he stayed for the Bible study.

In Hank's home around the table one night, Don claimed his faith in Jesus. Several years later, Don shared his story with me. He said that sharing meals with Hank was the turning point in his life.

Sharing meals was also an integral part of Jesus's ministry.



① JESUS SEES ZACCHAEUS

Nobody in all of Jericho liked Zacchaeus. As chief tax collector, Zacchaeus was not paid by the Roman Empire. In fact, he relied on taxes to supply his own personal income. We can only imagine the reaction of neighbors, friends, and relatives as Zacchaeus's house became more lavishly decorated, his clothes became finer, and his food became richer. Everyone knew that this extravagant lifestyle was supplied by their money, stolen by Zacchaeus, a Jewish tax collector who took advantage of his own people.

But then Jesus came into town, and he immediately saw through the layers of greed in Zacchaeus. Jesus had met enough tax collectors to know exactly what life was like for them. He even called one of them—Matthew—to be in his inner circle of disciples. Jesus saw that tax collectors like Zacchaeus wouldn't resist the chance to make more money for themselves; there was a sickness in their hearts for which Jesus had the remedy.

Small in stature, Zacchaeus shimmies up a tree to see Jesus. He wanted to be hidden, to see but not to be seen. But Jesus sees Zacchaeus all the same, and, even more remarkably, he calls him out from his hiding spot by name. Zacchaeus means “clean and pure” in Hebrew. In knowing him by name and calling him out of hiding, Jesus also calls Zacchaeus to return to himself.

Week 4:



② JESUS INVITES HIMSELF OVER

It's not difficult to imagine how nervous Zacchaeus must have felt when Jesus called out to him. "Oh man, I'm found out. In front of all these people I'm going to be judged once again." But Jesus does something so surprising, so unexpected, that the whole crowd begins talking about it. He not only sees and speaks with Zacchaeus—he invites himself into Zacchaeus's home.

Jesus saw the best in Zacchaeus. He saw through the rough exterior and knew Zacchaeus was a child of God, calling Zacchaeus out of hiding. Jesus knew Zacchaeus's name and he knows your name. He loves you and longs to be invited into your home and into your life.

As Jesus and Zacchaeus broke bread together, the crowds began to grumble. Why were people so upset that Jesus went to his home for dinner? It's important to understand that in the Ancient Near East eating was especially central to life and social relationships. Eating with someone was a statement that you wanted to be associated with them. The crowds knew this and they grew nervous. Who was this Jesus if he ate with this kind of riffraff?

It is so easy to think this way and write a false narrative. Yet Jesus saw the best when no one else did, and he sat and ate with Zacchaeus to affirm his value and worth. So Jesus communicated a great deal by the seemingly mundane choice to eat at Zacchaeus's house. The same is true today: who we choose to invite into our homes speaks volumes.

As the late priest and author Robert Farrar Capon wrote, "Everybody, even the worst stinker on earth, is somebody for whom Christ died."

③ JESUS CALLS ZACCHAEUS TO NEW LIFE

But that's not all. Jesus also redeems Zacchaeus by calling him back into the kingdom of God as a son of Abraham. Shining light into the lives of the broken, stubborn, sneaky, exhausting, terrifying, and unlovely, Jesus always sees the best and longs to invite himself into our homes. Jesus calls people to repentance, and we, as the church, are called to join in God's work of delivering the message of love.

Jesus calls Zacchaeus to new life, and Zacchaeus walks in obedience. He is moved to give, and he does so greatly. His generosity actually causes him to be indebted to others, a financial situation in which he hasn't been in some time. This could have been a frightening change, but it doesn't scare him. He has found something much more valuable.

This week I asked our staff to share who is on their BLESS list and how they can make room for those people in the next three weeks. When it was Taylor's turn he said, "I feel like God asked me to bless a man I see every weekday. He sits in a wheelchair in the middle of the street on my commute. I see him every day and I have never said hello."

So this week Taylor rolled down his window and said, "I just want to bless you today." He gave the man enough money to buy a paper.

Week 4:



On Tuesday Taylor bought the man another paper and they had a little conversation. Every day, Taylor bought the man a paper, which opened space for more conversation.

On Friday the man asked him, “Why’d you all of a sudden start buying papers?”

Taylor responded, “Well, I need to keep up with the times, and I appreciate how you’re always out here.”

The man said, “Well, okay! I’m glad you’ve moved into the neighborhood and I like our morning conversations. God bless you.”

Over the course of one week Taylor blessed a man he had never even said hello to before. In a sea of cars he took the time to roll down his window and say, I see you. You are someone. Jesus knows you and loves you.

Recently I came across this quote from *She Reads Truth*: “Many places God brings us are those we might never choose for ourselves.” How true that is! If Zacchaeus had known what his encounter with Jesus would lead to, would he have gone to see him? Honestly, we probably would not choose for ourselves many of the places and situations to which God brings us.

But when we stop trying to find ourselves, we see that we’ve already been found.

Over the course of the next three weeks, I invite you to open your home and your life to how we can bless people. Maybe it’s buying a paper, inviting neighbors, having lunch with a coworker or a friend from school.

We do Christ’s work when we gather around tables! We find Jesus breaking bread with people all throughout the Scriptures. Who can you bless this week through sharing a meal or coffee?

Conclusion

Please join me in prayer.

Jesus, you know us by name and you see the best in us. You take all of our broken pieces and you invite us to return to you. If someone here today is hearing this for the first time and you have captured their hearts, we pray that this would be a message they remember always. May they know that you see them, that you love them, that you value them, and that you call them from hiding back to you.

We all need to be reminded that we are loved and that someone sees the best in us. Thank you for loving us with an unconditional, amazing, beautiful, pursuing love and for calling us by name. May we be attentive to how we can share your love tangibly in our homes. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



intentional evangelism initiative



JOHN 13:1-17



GARY GADDINI

Gary Gaddini, Lead Pastor, Peninsula Covenant Church, Redwood City, CA

Gary has been serving through the ministry of Peninsula Covenant since 1997. He earned a BS in business management from Sacramento State University and received his MDiv from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He became a Christian during his freshman year of college, largely through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. His vocational ministry began as a chaplain to the UCLA Athletic Department with Athletes in Action. In 1990, Gary transitioned back to Northern California to serve as the pastor of youth and evangelism at Marin Covenant Church in San Rafael, California. He wrapped up a 21-year career serving in student and family ministries when he transitioned to the role of lead pastor of PCC in 2003.

Introduction

Imagine a ladder—perhaps yours is the ladder of work. At the bottom is a sign that makes a promise: “Climb this ladder, and you will find significance.” The ladder doesn’t look all that dangerous from the ground. So we climb, working hard, paying the price, and finding our significance in each rung we attain. But when we make it high enough, we discover a trail of strained relationships, regrets, too many compromises.

Or perhaps yours is the ladder of leisure. The sign at the bottom promises an escape at the top: “Go first—you deserve it!” If it gets too tough at work or home, you climb, thinking, “At least I have the golf course, the 49ers, the trails to run, World of Warcraft, Game of Thrones.” And so we know more about our fantasy football team than we do about our children’s hearts. We strive harder to achieve a yoga pose than to find intimacy with our spouse. We think this ladder will help us alleviate some of the pressure—when all it does is intensify it.

Or maybe you choose the ladder of sex. The sign at the bottom of this ladder promises intimacy, fulfillment, and thrill at the top. We climb, thinking “My needs matter; this is the path to intimacy!” Yet, once again, we find the emptiness growing inside of us, not being filled.

What if greatness in life isn’t defined by the climb? Jesus entered into our world and modeled greatness by descending into it. He came from the highest of the high to love and serve the last and the least.

Today I want to take us to a room, a meal where Jesus, in one action, taught us what it means to really live. He shows us that life is found in serving, or “kneeling love.” What does “kneeling love” look like? It involves all of us—our heads, our hearts, and our hands.



Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet

(JOHN 13:1-17)

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash

Week 5:

my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Three Points with Illustrations

① KNEELING LOVE INVOLVES OUR HEADS, AND WE ARE CALLED TO GO LOW



As Jesus washes his disciples’ feet, he reveals his servant identity, which is the basis for ours. Often we think the way to an identity is to climb the ladder and that our identity is found in the rungs, but being Christlike is actually just the opposite.

The centrality of Jesus’s servant identity to our own is beautifully expressed in Philippians 2:5-8: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus: who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”

Jesus is about to ascend to true heights by descending to the depths, just as he left the place of honor at the table at the Last Supper and set aside his normal garments. Philippians 2 tells us that although he was God, though he was the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, though he was the God who was so great that the heavens cannot contain him—that great God came down the ladder and became a human being. But he didn’t stop there. Jesus didn’t merely become human. He became a servant!

Kneeling love is the mindset that no matter where you are or what you’re doing, you don’t let the rungs of the ladder define you. Go low!

② KNEELING LOVE INVOLVES OUR HEARTS, AND WE ARE CALLED TO GO LAST

In the Gospel of Luke, we're told that on the way to the Last Supper a fight had broken out between the disciples over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. The disciples believed that very soon Jesus was going to take over, cast out the Roman oppressors, and come into power. So, naturally, they were arguing over who was going to have the highest office in the cabinet. The irony of the situation is lost on them. They were totally saturated in the world's understanding of greatness and power—they were climbing the ladder!—when they were standing in the very presence of the servant Christ, who is the most blatant contradiction of that worldly model of greatness in history.

Jesus washed his disciples' feet to teach them. Jesus's heart is revealed the same way our hearts are revealed: through actions. To one disciple at a time, Jesus exhibited kneeling love, washing their feet. Kneeling love is a love that sacrifices whatever is necessary to give people what they need for eternal life.

Think about who was at the table. Jesus washed Judas's feet. When was the last time you served a person who betrayed you? He washed Thomas's feet. When was the last time you served a person who doubted you? He washed Peter's feet. When was the last time you served a person who was ashamed to associate with you?

Jesus got on his knees and served everyone, always. How about us, empowered by the Holy Spirit, seeking to follow in Christ's footsteps? Can we serve everyone always? Can we serve the people who didn't vote the way we did—who don't believe the way we do? Can we serve the people who talk about us behind our backs? Can we serve the people who don't like us? Can we serve the people who have hurt us?

A servant heart is one that gets up and says, "I don't know whose fault this mess is, but I'll tell you what. I will take the hit." That's what Jesus is doing for his disciples and for all of us in washing their feet. It's what he did for us on the cross. He took the hit for all of our sin so that we will never have to take the hit ourselves. And he offers us the gift of forgiveness and new life.

Our community leaders have come to our church and asked how we can help the poor in our local community. Like so many communities, too many third graders are below literacy levels, foster kids are aging out of the system without healthy opportunities, too many people are living in fear because of the color of their skin, too many families are going hungry. How can we go last? How can we stand, like Jesus did, with the oppressed and with society's last and least?



Week 5:

③ KNEELING LOVE INVOLVES OUR HANDS, AND WE ARE CALLED TO GO LOVE

Jesus calls all who follow him to do and love as he does. It's not about the rungs of the ladder—it's about the mindset, posture, and action of being Christlike. This leads to a life that is connected to the favor of God and to the character of Jesus.

Most of us call ourselves blessed when we get to climb the ladder—when we get the bonus, get the house, get the promotion, or get into the school we were reaching for. But we are actually blessed when we are a blessing, living obediently in God's strength and power and loving as Christ does. As individuals and as a community, let us follow Jesus's example, focusing our mission efforts on the most vulnerable in our community and around the world.

Conclusion

We're called to go low, go last, and go love. When we live this way and allow it to become a lifestyle, when we quit climbing ladders and instead let the Holy Spirit guide us to kneeling love—then we can serve well and bless others.

Who is the Holy Spirit prompting you to serve this week? Where and how will you serve them? Let Jesus wash your feet, and let Jesus wash feet through you.





intentional evangelism initiative



1 JOHN 1:1-4



WILLIE COMER

**Willie Comer Jr., Pastor,
Berean Covenant Church, Champaign, IL**

Willie earned his BA from Chicago State University and his MA from Liberty Theological Seminary. He joined the Salem Baptist Church of Chicago under the pastoral leadership of James T. Meeks in 1994 and accepted his call to preach the gospel in 1996. He served in youth ministry at Salem, and attendance at the student worship service grew from 100 students every Sunday to now 1,450 high school and college students. In 2009, Willie he was called to plant Berean Covenant Church in Champaign, Illinois. He shares his passion for teenagers and young adults with his wife, Zabrina, and their three children. He loves to tell everyone he meets, "Don't be what you want to be; be everything God called you to be!"

Introduction

I remember sitting in Ms. Beasley’s classroom as a five-year-old at the beginning of my formal education. There were so many things for my young mind to comprehend—ABCs, 123s, and the names of my teachers and classmates. And what’s more, I had to adjust to a new environment with new people.

But I soon discovered that the most important lesson was yet to come. When I saw one of my classmates hit another student, I wanted to stand up for what was right. The other student started to cry, and I raised my hand and told my teacher, “Billy hit her.” I was proud of what I had done, but just as I was relaxing and basking in my moral victory, my teacher called my name. Confused and nervous, I walked to the front of the classroom. “Don’t get in the habit of being a tattletale,” she said.

“Huh? Didn’t you want to know what happened?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said, “but I wanted to hear it from the two people who were involved.”

From that moment on, I avoided getting involved in anyone else’s situation. But then I came to know Jesus Christ and the rules changed. I went to church and joined the congregation in singing songs like “Go Tell It on the Mountain!” The pastor encouraged us to share our testimonies. This was totally out of my character; I had vowed to never be a tattletale again!

Then my mother shared Revelation 12:11 with me: “But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.” She explained to me that when it comes to the things of God, it is not only good but it’s our duty to tell somebody. She said, “God has given you the license to be a tattletale of his blessings in your life.”

In this sixth and final week of our sermon series on the BLESS Initiative, we’re going to focus on the importance of sharing our stories. Our Scripture for today is 1 John 1:1-4. Here John is writing to let his readers know that his experiences with Jesus Christ were real and true. This text encourages us to share our stories because God is real; we have seen God move in our personal lives, and we have a story to tell!

The Word of Life (1 JOHN 1:1-4)

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.



Three Points with Illustrations

① GOD HAS BEEN AT WORK FROM THE BEGINNING AND GOD IS ACTIVE NOW!

In verse 1 John says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.” This language closely mirrors the opening verse of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

We all have our own stories of God working in our lives. We were minding our own business, and, out of nowhere, God showed up! Jesus did this in his interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well. She was simply going to draw water, but Jesus comes all the same, engages her in an in-depth theological conversation, and tells her about her own story. In response, she runs and tells her story to her whole town, and all who heard her story came to know Jesus!

That’s why we have to tell our story: because somebody has been ordained to hear it so they will come to know the Lord. Our story is a vital part of our call to go and make disciples!

② GOD’S ACTIVITY IN THIS WORLD IS AUTHENTIC

Let’s take a look at verse 2: “This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.” Note that John says that the Word of life was revealed to him and to the disciples. God has revealed the miracles of heaven to them. The Word of life, which is Christ Jesus, is not hidden—it’s revealed! We don’t have to search for it!

When Jesus came and chose the disciples, they weren’t out looking for some hidden treasure that could not be found; the treasure came and found them. It was Jesus who revealed himself to them, saying: “If you follow me, I will make you fishers of all people.” Christianity is not a hide-and-go-seek relationship with God!

In Romans 1:20, the Apostle Paul writes: “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse.” Many of us have seen God’s miracles up close and in person. We have seen the miraculous recovery of someone who was sick to the point of death. We have seen people survive through times when bills were due and there was no money coming in. These experiences are part of our stories, and they must be shared so that the blessings of God will be revealed.

God has revealed himself in creation, in Scripture, and in Jesus Christ. We have a part to play in that revelation by sharing our stories.



③ WE NEED TO SHARE HOW GOD IS AT WORK IN OUR LIVES

Finally, let's read verses 3 and 4: "We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

John closes this introduction with a fascinating explanation of why we need to share our story. Our story and the message of Jesus Christ go hand in hand. This is not because we want to (or are able to) brag. No, we tell our story so that others will be able to share in the same fellowship with God that we have through Jesus Christ. We find a joy that is complete when our story draws another soul to the Lord!

I serve as the executive director of East Central Illinois Youth for Christ, a nonprofit that embraces the significance of storytelling as an integral part of evangelism. They call it 3 Story Evangelism. The understanding is that everyone has a story, and it is critical that we share and listen to these stories! But Jesus also has a story, and it's in his story that we find eternal life. It's in his story that our story is changed. It's his story of a God who came to the earth to deliver us from sin; it's his story of a God who was persecuted by the very people he came to save, who wore a crown of thorns, who was nailed to a wooden cross, who was buried in a borrowed tomb; it's his story, when he was raised from the dead on the third day. And today that same power, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, lives in us and we need to share it!



Conclusion

Share your story! Share Jesus's story! Listen to the stories of others!

Get get a cup of coffee with a friend, and tell them about the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus Christ in your life. It's okay to be a tattletale.

If the body of Christ doesn't share its story, then the world will never be moved through the love, mercy, and grace of Christ that is found in our testimony. It is in this testimony that those who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ will find it. Go to the mountaintop and shout about the goodness of Jesus!