



Improving Our Reach **Strengthening Our Desire To Share Our Faith**

Icebreaker:

If you struggle with the idea of sharing your faith, why do you find it challenging?

The Study:

Our new sermon series – *“Reach, Teach & Unleash: Discovering A Fresh Vision For Our Church”* – is built off of what we call the Lord’s “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20) where we are told to *“Go and make disciples...baptizing them...teaching them...”*. Notice, the ‘going’ – or “reaching” – comes first.

But this is hard for many of us, which the Lord understands. In Luke 15:1-2, as Jesus reaches out to lost people, we uncover three lessons that might help us improve our reach.



Lesson 1: Remind yourself often why it’s so amazing to be a follower of Christ.

*“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all **drawing near to him.**”*

1. There is something magnetic about Jesus’ message and personality that compels lost people to come to him. What do you think it was? See if you can come up with 3 or 4 things.

2. Sometimes followers of Christ can be at “this Christian thing” so long that we forget what drew us to Jesus in the first place. We can “lose our first love”. Read Psalm 103:1-5 then discuss the questions.

a. *“Forget not his benefits”* says verse 2. But we do. Why do you think we’re so forgetful? Share your thoughts.

b. David writes this psalm in part to make a list of all the benefits he receives from knowing God. In verses 3-5 he lists 5 benefits. What are they?

c. You might say this is one of David’s *“30-Second Testimonies”*. (Did someone say the word “segue”? 😊)

A couple months ago, we challenged people to come up with a 30-Second Testimony by writing a paragraph that begins with the words *“I love Jesus because...”*. It’s time for us to revisit this project, because it’s so foundational to being able to share our faith with others.

In fact, everyone should have *multiple* 30-Second Testimonies in their back-pockets. You as a follower of Christ should be able to explain:

- How Jesus saved you (your conversion story).
- What Jesus has delivered you from (a sin, an addiction, debt, fear, anxiety, aimlessness, selfishness, grief, etc.)
- What Jesus has taught you (about himself, about yourself, about community, family, living life well, etc.)
- How you have experienced Jesus’ presence in your life (an answered prayer, a holy moment, a vision, still small voice, etc.)

Take 3 minutes right now of silent reflection (or as close to silent as can be.) Can you match David and come up with a list of 5 benefits that have come to your life through knowing Christ. Write them here:

Here's your work to do at home (not to be confused with *homework!*): Begin crafting together not one, not two, but *three or more 30-Second Testimonies*. Make one of them your conversion story, but the other two are up to you and the Spirit of God.

Try to write at least one a week for the next month. If you belong to a Life Group, devote 10-15 minutes each meeting (for the next month or so) to allow people to share their stories.

Just one rule: each story must be no longer than 30-seconds. (Someone keep time.) This is a training exercise to do 2 things: 1) Enlarge your love for Christ. And 2) Increase your capacity to share Christ with others. *And now back to your regularly scheduled Bible study...*

Lesson 2: Develop habits of hospitality.

*"And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man **receives** sinners..."*

3. The Greek word translated "receives" means to 'welcome as into your own home'. Read the following verses, then make 3-5 observations about "hospitality" from them.

Romans 12:13; 1 Tim.3:2; 1 Peter 4:9; Hebrews 13:2

Observations:

4. Since we want to be "Sunday Strong" at Bridgeway, then hospitality needs to be one of our greatest strengths.

a. As a group, see if you can come up with a *list* and *number* of all the different volunteers we need each Sunday.

5. Benjamin Franklin made famous an old, old poem:

"For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For the want of a horse, the rider was lost. For want of a rider, the war was lost."

What does this have to do with the hospitality we offer on Sunday?

Lesson 3: Learn to love the lost.

"...and eats with them."

6. In Bible times (and probably our own) to eat with someone is to move well past basic kindness. It demonstrates great affection for the other person, and a desire to grow in friendship. It demonstrates *love*. Jesus expressed this love for the lost ones who came to him.

Many churches today claim to be "*Welcoming & Affirming*" which means they not only accept the sinful, broken person who comes in, but they *affirm* them, as if to say, "*You're fine just as you are. There's nothing about you that needs to change. You're just how God made you to be.*"

This will be a delicate question to ask, but it must be asked. (So be gracious in your discussion.)

How is Jesus' love for the lost different from this?

What might it mean for our church life if we practice acceptance ("*I value you as someone made in the image of God*" / "*Jesus died for me just as he died for you*" / "*I am just as broken in sin and in need of grace as you*") but *not* affirmation?

Pastor Bear challenged us on Sunday to identify 8 to 12 people in our "influence orbit" or "oikos" who don't know Jesus, but whom we could love back to life. The second part of this challenge is to begin to pray daily for them by name. Begin that project now, by writing some names down here.

Am I willing to do my part? Yes _____ No _____

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