

TEXT: I Thessalonians 2:1-8

TITLE: "SHARING THE GOSPEL"

DATE: February 13, 2011

SERIES: THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER (#4 of 7)

Possible – heart stickers with Share the Gospel printed on them

Number 4: The Core Value of Evangelism

This series is on our core values. Core Values are the DNA that define who we are in Christ Jesus. They are not just creeds on plaque or notes in a book somewhere or banners on a wall. They are the essence of who we. Evangelism is the fourth core value.

PROP: *Big Poster that reads, Elements of Evangelism with the five elements I can put in. Done on the computer in color, etc.

ILLUSTRATION: (*John cartoon of this with second copy with punch line) Melodie Dean tells of the time her little daughter was sitting with her in church one day when the song leader announced they were going to sing "Till the Whole World Knows." Her daughter whispered, "I think we're going to be here a long time."

God wants the whole world to know the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To fulfill His passion, God uses people like you and me to share the gospel with others.

The act of sharing the gospel is called evangelism.

Scriptures makes it clear that it is a core value and lifestyle for all Christians and not something just for a few.

ILLUSTRATION: A.T. Pierson was an American Presbyterian pastor and prolific author with a passion to see the world evangelized. He died in the 20th century and on Pierson's gravestone was a picture on an open Bible. On the Bible was engraved two verses. I John 5:11, "*God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*" Matthew 28:19, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" He said, "Witnessing is the whole work of the whole church for the whole age."

In the passage today, we discover five challenging elements of evangelism that are crucial for our lives today.

ELEMENT I. (v.1-2) A BOLDNESS TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

"You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure." (v.1.)

1. Paul refutes the claim that his and his colleagues' mission in Thessalonica was a failure.
2. Paul's more typical use of this term translated here as failure is the meaning 'empty effect.'

3. Paul claims that the missionary trip to Thessalonica was not a waste or without content.
 4. They did not come empty-handed, but with the gospel full of power.
 5. The opening words, "You know, brothers," is literally and emphatically, "You yourselves know."
 6. Whatever others may have been saying, the Thessalonians knew the truth that their missionary endeavor had been fruitful.
 7. Paul and his traveling companions, Timothy and Silas, had been able to stay in Thessalonica only three weeks, but it was a fruitful time.
 8. There was a vibrant church in Thessalonica showing evidence of the fruitfulness of Paul's brief stay and ministry in Thessalonica.
 9. This first verse is linked to verse nine of the previous where it says, **"For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (I Thessalonians 1:9)**
 10. The Thessalonian converts' changed lives prove the genuineness of their conversion.
 11. Life transformation is the reason for sharing the gospel.
 12. People need the life transforming gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ILLUSTRATION: In a second anniversary interview, a British survivor of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center made an observation. On that deadly day, she was working for a brokerage firm whose offices were located in Tower 2. The young woman made it out of that tower just before it collapsed. Many of her co-workers and friends were inside. Breaking down, she spoke of one close friend and she said, "I keep thinking, "I should have asked him to go with me. I can't get that out of my mind."**
13. Let's have the boldness to share the gospel with others and not leave them behind.
Paul wrote **"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16)**
 14. The mission could be fulfilled, life could become radically Christian, because of the power of the gospel.
 15. The gospel we proclaim is powerful.
 16. The gospel is still transforming lives today.
 17. Many of you sitting in this room today have been transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 18. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, **"...our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction..." (I Thessalonians 1:5)**
 19. Paul had courage to share the gospel because he knew the power of the gospel to transform lives.
 20. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because of the difference it could make in people's lives.

“We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.” (I Thessalonians 2:2)

21. Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ was not easy for Paul.

22. With boldness and courage, he dared to tell of the gospel in spite of strong opposition.

Example: Acts 16 tells of some of the suffering they faced in Philippi. They were stripped, beaten and thrown into prison. While there, they led the jailer and all of his family to Christ. Listen to what took place. “At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.” (Acts 16:33)

23. Evangelism is not always easy or convenient.

24. Paul reveals that it takes boldness and courage to be a missionary

25. In one sense, Christians are all called to be missionaries in that all Christians are sent on a mission.

ILLUSTRATION: *David McKeena, former president of Asbury Seminary, said the present situation in North America requires that “Every church must be a mission station, and every Christian a missionary.”

26. We are missionaries on a mission.

ILLUSTRATION: *“God never called you into the church. God called you into the mission field.” (Tom Bandy)

27. We must never substitute mission with church.

28. Going to church or being part of a church is crucial, but it is not the mission.

ILLUSTRATION: Preacher and prolific writer, Vance Havner said, “The gospel is not something we come to church to hear; it is something we go from church to tell.”

29. Christians are people with a God-given mission.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

ILLUSTRATION: *Bill Bright, the late founder of Campus Crusade for Christ shared his approach to evangelism: “Although I have shared Christ personally with many thousands of people through the years, I am a rather reserved person and I do not always find it easy to witness. But I have made this my practice, and I urge you to do the same: Assume that whenever you are alone with another person for more than a few moments, you are there by divine appointment to explain to that person the love and forgiveness he can know through faith in Jesus Christ.”

30. We are people on a mission by divine appointment to share the gospel.

ILLUSTRATION: *Vance Havner, who died in 1986 once said, “We do not have a secret to be hidden but a story to be heralded.”

31. Their holy boldness testifies to their dedication to the mission of sharing the gospel.

32. The mission of sharing the gospel had so gripped their heart.

33. The key to evangelism is a burden for the lost.

ILLUSTRATION: Missionary to the American Indians in the 1700's, David Brainerd, known as a man of prayer, has been called, "the pioneer of modern missionary work." He once shared his burden for the lost when he said, "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep, I dreamed of these things, and when I awoke, the first thing I thought of was this great work."

34. People need the life-transforming gospel.

35. Nothing was more important for Paul than sharing God's gospel.

36. Because God is the source and origin of the gospel, it has authority

37. We must know His gospel and proclaim it clearly and boldly.

ILLUSTRATION: One church leader observed, "There is no true evangelism if the name, the teaching, the promises, the life, the death, the resurrection, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus Christ the Son of God are not proclaimed."

38. As one person observed, Paul was committed to the gospel, telling the gospel wherever he went

39. Their courage and boldness to share the gospel was only possible with the help of God.

40. God was the source of their courage and boldness.

41. They were aware of the presence of God and boldly proclaimed the gospel in the presence of God.

42. By the help of God, they faced the suffering and dared to proclaim the gospel.

43. The book of Acts records the prayer of the church for help in sharing the word of the gospel. **"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness." (Acts 4:29)** Listen to what happened,

"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." (Acts 4:31)

44. What could happen if you pray every day, "Lord enable your servant to speak your word with great boldness."

45. God, through His power and Spirit, can help you to be bold and courageous in sharing your faith.

46. Will you ask God to give you a boldness to share the story of the gospel?

47. Will you ask God to help you to be more bold in sharing His gospel?

48. Boldness is an element of evangelism.

ILLUSTRATION: Martin Luther is a significant and well-known name in Christian history. He was summoned to give account on April 17, 1521. Some of his writings were on a table and he was asked to respond. After prayer the next day, the reformer apologized for the harsh tone of many of his writings, but said that he could not reject the majority of them or the teachings in them. Luther respectfully but boldly stated, "Unless I am convinced by proofs from Scriptures or by plain and clear reasons and arguments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do

anything against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

49. Daring to share the gospel, Paul had clearly and boldly said, "Here I stand."

**ELEMENT II. (vs.3 & 5) AN INTEGRITY THAT MATCHES THE MESSAGE:
"For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you." (I Thessalonians 2:3)**

1. These missionaries were not proclaiming their gospel but *His* gospel.
2. Therefore, the messenger and method needed to match the message they proclaimed.

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ..."(Philippians 1:27)

3. Paul declares there is no tampering with the message, no unworthy motives or dubious methods.
4. Paul affirms their total trustworthiness and integrity
5. They had integrity in their intentions and honesty in their methods.
6. Integrity was and still is a key factor in the success of the Christian mission.
7. Looking at the etymology of integrity, we discover it comes from the word "integer," which means "a whole number or a complete unit."
8. Integrity is the quality or condition of being whole or undivided, completeness.
9. It is when that which is on the inside and the outside are the same.
10. They spoke with integrity of content, motive, and method, which are markers of God's missionaries today.

Example: J.B. Phillips paraphrases verse 3 in positive terms saying, "Our message to you is true, our motives are pure, our conduct is absolutely above board."

11. Paul stated their word did not come from error or, in other words, deceit or delusion.
12. They spoke the truth, not leading others or themselves astray.
13. He also said their appeal did not come from impure motives and that they were not trying to trick them by pretending to be something they were not.
14. Paul continued the focus on integrity saying, **"You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed-God is our witness." (I Thessalonians 2:5)**
15. Flattery speaks of insincerity
16. Some theologians have suggested that the word 'flattery' could be better translated 'cajolery' for the word refers to the use of acceptable speech with the purpose of lulling another into a sense of security, so that he may obtain his own ends.
17. He said they did not put on a mask to cover up greed, for they were not greedy or self-centered in presenting the gospel.
18. Ministry had not been a pretext to cover up greed or the passion for acquisition.
19. It is a tragedy when Christian leaders and ministers are immoral, greedy, and lacking in integrity.

20. Paul declared that God Himself could vouch for them, for everything they did was in the presence of God.
21. Paul is vindicated in heaven's courtroom for the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-wise God knew and could bear witness to the truth about him.
22. Paul is declaring that his life has been an open book for the Thessalonians to read.

“You know how we lived among you for your sake.” (I Thessalonians 1:5)

23. With integrity, in his letter to Corinthians, Paul wrote **“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” (II Corinthians 4:1-2)**

ILLUSTRATION: The Stoic philosopher Seneca, who lived in Paul’s day, advised that people should allow only those to influence them who teach us by their lives, who tell us what we ought to do and then prove it by practice, who show us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have ordered us to avoid.

24. Paul practiced what he preached.

25. What we say cannot be separated from the story of our lives.

“You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed...encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” (I Thessalonians 2:10&12)

26. To effectively evangelize, we must be people who practice what they preach.

ILLUSTRATION: *C.H. Spurgeon, famous preacher of the 1800’s, said, “A man’s life is always more forcible than his speech. If his life and doctrine disagree, the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching.”

27. The way we live matters.

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:1-2)

28. The world needs to hear the message of the gospel from people of integrity whose lives match the message.

ILLUSTRATION: * My friend Peter Lundell in his book, Armed for Battle, said, “Our evangelism is no better than the Christian witness of how we live our lives.”

29. The truth of the gospel is firmly bound up with the character and integrity of its messengers.

30. Integrity matters.

31. We must live lives which commend the gospel.

ILLUSTRATION: Integrity is crucial for business and personal success. A study done by UCLA Graduate School of Management and Korn/Ferry International surveyed 1,300 senior executive. Seventy-one percent of them said that integrity was the quality most needed to succeed in business

32. Integrity is crucial for an effective witness of the gospel.

ELEMENT III. (vs.4 & 6) PLEASING GOD, WHO TESTS OUR HEARTS

“On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.”

(I Thessalonians 2:4)

1. Paul had been falsely accused, so he clarified what they had been doing.
2. Paul took evangelism seriously, for he had a sacred stewardship, having been entrusted with the gospel

“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (I Corinthians 4:1-2)

3. He had a responsibility before God and had to give answer to Him.
4. With assurance of God’s approval, neither worldly nor evil powers could quiet them from taking sharing the gospel they had been trusted with.
5. They spoke to please God and not men.

EXAMPLE: The book of Acts tells that Peter and John had been commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. They replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20)

6. God delights in us when we are loyal to Him despite worldly pressures impinging upon us.

ILLUSTRATION: *I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody." —Bill Cosby

7. Every person you have sought to please your entire life will some day pass away, but you will be accountable to please God who is eternal.
8. Paul knows that he is answerable to God.
9. God continually test our hearts
10. The fact that we are answerable to God should keep us on track.

ILLUSTRATION: Theologian John Stott observes that a strong sense of accountability to God is marvelously liberating, adding, “To be accountable to him is to be delivered from the tyranny of human criticism.”

11. The motivation for spreading the gospel is pleasing God who wants us to share the gospel.
12. Desiring to please God results in bold and effective witness.
13. Paul uses the same word for pleasing to speak of a loyal soldier pleasing a superior officer by not becoming entangled in worldly things that distract from one’s military service in his letter to Timothy.

“No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs-he wants to please his commanding officer.” (II Timothy 2:4)

14. Paul lived and witnessed for an audience of one.

“We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.” (I Thessalonians 2:6)

15. They were sharing the gospel to please God and here Him say, “Well done my good and faithful servants.”

16. What does God think about your evangelism?
17. The missionaries were concerned not with their own image in the eyes of others but that people know about Jesus.
18. It is not about us, it is about Jesus.
19. Evangelism is forgetting about ourselves and focusing on others and sharing Jesus.
20. It is not about people knowing us but about people knowing Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION: William Carey was the great missionary pioneer to India. When he was on his deathbed, he was visited by a young man named Alexander Duff who greatly admired the famous missionary. After a long visit, Carey asked Duff to pray with him. Following the prayer, when Duff turned to leave, he heard Carey's feeble voice calling him back. "Mr. Duff," said Carey, "you have been speaking about 'Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey.' When I am gone, say nothing about Dr. Carey. Speak about Dr. Carey's Savior."

ELEMENT IV. (vs.6-7) GENTLENESS, AS WE SHARE CHRIST WITH OTHERS

"...As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children." (I Thessalonians 2: 6-7)

1. Paul did not throw his weight around, for he was not in it for self-glory.
- ILLUSTRATION Carl Sandberg spent years studying Abraham Lincoln. He once summarized Lincoln's character like this. "A man of steel and velvet, hard as rock and soft as drifting fog."**
2. Paul added a wonderful combination of toughness and tenderness, strength and gentleness that shines through this passage.
 3. Here, the focus is not his gentleness with others.
 4. Instead of playing the heavy father, they had acted like a mother caring for her little children.
 5. This tender image exposes the gentleness he had as he shared his life and the gospel with others.
 6. The Bible is clear that those who call Christ their master will display gentleness.

ILLUSTRATION: Famous preacher of the 1700's, Jonathan Edwards suggests that gentleness "may well be called the Christian spirit. All who are truly godly and are real disciples of Christ have a gentle spirit in them."

7. Paul wrote to the church at Philippi this challenge, "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." (Philippians 4:5)
8. Scripture gives two tasks as it relates to gentleness that are very helpful.
9. The first is to pursue and not just hope we will be gentle in our dealings with others.

PURSUE GENTLENESS: "But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." (I Timothy 6:10-12)

10. The second is to put on gentleness.

11. Through an act of the will, we decide to put it on, much like we put on our clothes.

PUT ON GENTLENESS: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)

12. How we treat people matters.

13. We are to be a blessing to people, not a burden.

14. How we approach people and interact with people on a daily basis matters.

ILLUSTRATION: (Show commercial) My wife’s favorite commercial is one that shows a drill sergeant as a counselor. It is the opposite of compassion and gentleness. Instead of being gentle with the person he is counseling, he yells at them and throws papers at them.

15. Paul did not win people to Christ by throwing the book at them and yelling at them.

16. He won them to Christ with gentleness.

17. Gentleness is foundational as we share Christ with others.

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (I Peter 3:15)

18. With gentleness, we are prepared to share the hope we have in Christ.

19. With gentleness, we can tell our story of God working in our lives day by day.

20. This gentleness comes from the One we represent.

21. Jesus truly is the gentle Shepherd.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

ILLUSTRATION: (*Picture of this statue if possible) In Copenhagen, stands a famous statue of Jesus by the Danish sculptor, Thorvaldsen. The sculptor was fascinated by Jesus. The mind of Christ impressed him. Thorvaldsen said, “With that brain, He will conquer the world!” Inspired by Jesus’ life, Thorvaldsen decided to make a heroic statue of the Lord. Working in clay, he fashioned a stately figure. Thorvaldsen felt satisfied, saying, “Jesus is the greatest figure in human history. This statue will represent Him.” The sculptor left the clay model in a shed to cure. However, sea mists came in and affected the clay. When Thorvaldsen returned, the up stretched arms and hands had dropped from their imperial gestures to a posture of beckoning. The hands lingered in a pleading position. The face, originally raised in regal bearing, had lowered, giving a look of compassion. Suddenly, Thorvaldsen realized this strange twist had given a far more accurate portrayal of Jesus Christ. He had intended to inscribe on the pedestal: “Follow My Commands.” Instead, he placed the words: “Come unto Me.”

22. Paul had come with the gentleness of Jesus that bids us come unto Him.

ELEMENT V. (v.8) A LOVE THAT SHARES OUR LIVES AS WE SHARE THE GOSPEL

” We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” (I Thessalonians 2:8)

1. Paul exposes his great love for the people.
2. Effective evangelism flows out of love for people.
3. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...”
4. He wants all to come to a saving knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (II Peter 3:9)

5. He calls us to love the world.

ILLUSTRATION: New Zealand evangelist, Brian Medway said, “We have churches full of people who love Jesus, but we don’t love what Jesus loves.”

6. Love demands that evangelism become a high priority in our lives.
7. Because of love, it was not enough to share the gospel.
8. Love demanded more of them.
9. Love calls us to give ourselves.
10. Love called them to share their lives with them with delight.
11. They were not just doing their duty of evangelism or ministry.
12. In one sense, Paul was using friendship or relationship evangelism.
13. They were willing to share all that they had and all that they were.
14. They were prepared to share on the deepest level their lives, as well.
15. Gospel is best shared in the context of relationship.
16. Gospel is best shared not when it is separate from but part of our very lives.
17. Paul gives not only what he has, the gospel, but what he is, himself.
18. To share their own lives involved utter self-denial, “Spending and being spent” in the interest of others.
19. The meaning is not simply we were willing to give our lives for you, but we were willing to give ourselves to you, to put ourselves at your disposal, without reservation.
20. Getting involved in people’s lives enables us to share Christ, who is our life, naturally.
21. Every conversation can be an opportunity to talk about Jesus if your eyes and heart are open to the opportunity.

ILLUSTRATION: One elevator operator at a hospital in Nashville once said, “I’m just a nobody telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody.”

22. Love makes a difference.

ILLUSTRATION: Chuck Quinley tells the story of a fireman from Philadelphia and his wife who went along with another couple for a dream vacation in Cancun, Mexico. While there, the men decided to rent jet skis and have an adventure at sea. They saved money by avoiding the better-named shops and choosing to rent the more banged-up equipment of a small outfit farther down the beach, away from the

trafficked areas. The storeowners held their credit cards as a guarantee for the jet skis and waved cheerfully as the men sprinted across the bay. Most people stay near the shore, but, being brave American men, these two headed out to the horizon, miles from shore, zigzagging and enjoying the exhilaration of this hot sport. That's when the true adventure began. The jet ski of the fireman stopped working. His brother-in-law came along side to help. They tried repeatedly to crank the engine, but it was dead. "Those jerks! Probably out of gas!" Having nothing to tow him with, the brother-in-law decided to return to the shop and get a rope or a mechanic or a replacement jet ski. Reluctantly, the other accepted the plan.

The brother-in-law had trouble getting any sympathy from the shop owners who simply reminded him that he was liable for all damages. By the time they returned to look for his partner, he had traveled miles in the Gulf currents and was nowhere to be found. It was hard to say exactly where he had been anyway. The horizon is a pretty big place. The lost man's frantic wife stayed on the phone with the U.S. Embassy, trying to get someone to organize the Coast Guard to find her missing husband, who, they hoped, was still floating on the jet ski (which had been leaking). Six days later, they were still trying to find the stranded man.

Thankfully, the story has a happy ending. The jet-skier was rescued at sea a week later, covered in boils and serious sunburn, and dehydrated. He had had some horrifying encounters with sharks that had circled him at times while he floated helplessly in the Gulf of Mexico. This man was saved because people who loved him refused to stop searching for him until he was found, and because a captain cared enough to go through the ordeal of stopping his large merchant vessel to help someone in distress.

23. God calls us to lovingly seek others out and share the gospel and our lives with them.
24. God calls us to stop in the busyness of life and help others in spiritual distress.

CONCLUSION: Are you sharing the gospel? There are five elements of evangelism that result in evangelism being a way of life that impacts the people around us, as we *lift up Jesus so all are drawn to follow Him*. Are these elements part of your life? Will you make a commitment to be a missionary and fulfill the mission of evangelism God has for you? May "I love to tell the story" be the testimony of our lives. Will you share the gospel?

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