

I. Introduction

- A. All of us are here today because somebody told us about Jesus. Or, because somebody is in the process of telling you about Jesus — glad you're here.
- B. Every single one of us is another link in a long chain of witnesses to the saving work of the carpenter of Nazareth, the one we call our Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. There is a name for the activity of this chain of witnesses. It is called evangelism.
- D. We are talking about evangelism today. It is our new series called "Equipped to Tell."
- E. Jesus said,
 1. *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)*
 2. *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*
- F. Over and over again, Jesus told his friends to tell their friends about him. About his death. About his resurrection. About his power to forgive. And about the gift of eternal life.
 1. Jesus wanted the whole world to know there was a door to salvation, and how to enter it.
- G. This is the most important thing a church does. And by church I mean us. I mean you, and me, however messed up and imperfect we may be.
- H. The most important thing you can do to make the world a better place is to pitch in on the cause of world evangelism.
- I. It's not the only thing, but it is the most important thing.
- J. So let's break it down.

II. The Heart of Evangelism

A. Meaning

1. Here is one of my life verses:
 - a) *"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)*
2. There is the title for the message we communicate: the gospel of grace.
3. You might know that this part of the Bible was originally written in Greek. What you might not know is the greek word that its translated gospel. It looks like this in Greek:
 - a) euaggelion (ev-an-GEL-lee-on, the g is hard). (accent the third syllable).
 - b) Evangelion.
4. If you take the word for "good" and add it to the word for "news" you get the word Evangelion.
 - a) In its noun form, it simply means good news. Or gospel.
 - b) In its verb form, it means to tell the gospel.
5. This is the heart and soul of evangelism. So, let's define some terms:
 - a) GOSPEL: the good news of who Jesus is and what he did (the Cross) to reconcile sinful people to God.
 - b) EVANGELISM: the activity of communicating the gospel and calling a person to respond through faith alone in Christ alone.
 - c) EVANGELIST: a person who evangelizes.
 - (1) Some Christians have a special gifting and calling to be an evangelist. Billy Graham was one of them.
 - (2) But all Christians have a calling from God to do the work of an evangelist in a way that make sense for you.
 - d) EVANGELISTIC: a person or group on fire for evangelism.
 - (1) And now the curve ball...
 - e) EVANGELICAL: a person or group dedicated to the authority of Scripture, and holding to historic, biblical orthodox theology.
6. You can be evangelical in your beliefs, and not evangelistic in your activities.
7. That's a big problem in Christianity today.
 - a) Churches are evangelical without being evangelistic — light without heat.
 - (1) Or
 - b) Churches are evangelistic without being evangelical — heat without light.
8. I am absolutely committed to being both — solidly evangelical and passionately evangelistic — as long as God allows me the breath and the brains to be either.

B. Mission

1. I have many friends who are pastors, and I have talked to many of them as they are developing their mission statement.
2. Help me with ours. What is our mission?
 - a) Helping people find and follow God.
 - (1) When we help people find God, that's evangelism (the Gospel of Grace).
 - (2) When we help people follow God, that's spiritual growth (sanctification) the Grace Pathway.
3. But here's the thing I tell my pastor friends. If you don't have evangelism front and center in your mission statement, it simply is not going to happen. Here are some samples from other churches:
 - a) We are the "living letters" God uses to communicate his love to our city.
 - b) We are the voice and the hand that encourages people to change their lives with hope, comfort, and peace
 - c) To be a New Testament church existing for the supremacy of the name and purpose of Jesus Christ.
 - d) To WIN people to Jesus Christ, TRAIN believers to become disciples, and SEND disciples out to impact the world.
 - e) *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always." Matthew 28:19-20* (a church in Houston)
4. This is called the Great Commission. Jesus gave us many missions, and many commissions, but only one Great Commission.
 - a) I get nervous when people pick a church for the fellowship or the love.
 - b) I get nervous when people pick a church just for the good teaching.
 - c) I get nervous when people pick a church because of the music, or the worship, or the experiences.
 - d) I get nervous when people pick a church just because of the good looking, Italian pastor — though, do whatever works for you.
 - (1) The main thing is the mission.
5. I would simply not be part of a church where people are not routinely getting saved, no matter how much everybody loved each other, and no matter how tight your relationships, and no matter good the teaching.

6. How few churches evangelize! Instead, so many create little clusters of mutual admiration societies where they criticize other churches for how they're too big or showy they are.
 7. Listen, as long as there is one unsaved person still in your community, your church is too small.
 8. And the problem is nobody really ever brings it up.
 9. Well, God sent me to bring it up.
 10. Welcome to Neighborhood.
 11. In fact, some churches resist evangelism, and they don't even realize it.
 - a) Here's how that happens. You go to a church where everybody loves each other. People are nice. People care about each other. It's feels like a family. It's great.
 - b) Everybody knows everybody.
 - c) But, then another family joins the church. And you're nice and you kind of fold them into the church family.
 - d) Then another and another and another.
 - e) All of a sudden, there are — wait for it — STRANGERS in the church.
 - f) Everybody doesn't know everybody anymore. And the very thing that makes you love your church is wrecked!
 - g) Nobody ever says this out loud, of course. It's sub-conscious. But the people begin to sabotage the growth... and it's very hard for newcomers to break in.
 - (1) [Story of crabby Christians... Classic]
 12. This is the death of evangelism, and it's probably happening in ninety percent of churches today.
 13. Without a steady stream of new believers, the church becomes a country club or a social justice machine or a refuge to cloister people from the big mean world.
 14. So, just to make sure there's no confusion, at Neighborhood church, we do not consider ourselves a cruise-ship to make people feel good about themselves, we see ourselves as a Battleship, and we're on a mission to depopulate hell.
 15. The devil hates this. Don't be on his side.
 16. Welcome aboard.
 - a) Do we have a MASH unit to help people get their lives together and their souls healed. Yes. (Celebrate Recovery, Stephen Ministry, Divorce Care, GriefShare, etc)
 - b) Do we offer equipping and training so that our whole lives can be a testimony? Yes. (Classes, FPU, GrowU, Symposium)
 - c) Do we create experiences and develop groups for to create unit cohesion and to boost morale? Places where everybody can find a belonging and love? Yes. (Life Groups, Small Groups, Classes)
 - (1) But these are all means to an end, and the end is that all of Redding and beyond can be set from from the devil's captivity and welcomed into the family of God by the power of the gospel of grace.
 - (2) It's our mission. It's our battle. It's the war we're in.
 - (3) Why?
 - d) Why does evangelism matter. Let me mention what I think are the two biggest motivations.
- C. Motives
1. A SENSE OF CONCERN. Because every person's eternal destiny is at stake.
 - a) Every person who gets saved reduces by one the number of people in hell. To me, that's motivational.
 - b) In my doctoral program I wrote a major paper arguing that the existence of hell was a valid and central motive for evangelism in the early church. My professor didn't like it. He gave it the only B I ever got in my doctoral program. Not because of how it was written — it was brilliantly written(!), but because of the theology. He wasn't so sure about hell. That's a view called universalism (all roads lead to God).
 - (1) To strengthen universalism is to weaken evangelism.
 - c) Too many churches are erasing hell. Too many books. Too many pastors.
 - d) Might as well erase the Bible.
 - e) You might as well declare the whole Christian missionary enterprise a colossal waste of time.
 - f) But the Bible is clear, and the stakes could not be higher. Every person's eternal destiny hinges on the single question: what did you do with Jesus? Who was he to you? Was he your Savior or have you placed your hopes in something else.
 - (1) *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14)*
 - (2) *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men... (2 Corinthians 5:11)*
 - g) If you believe that every human soul is immortal — as the Bible teaches — and if you believe that the wages of sin is death and that outside of Christ there is no hope — as the Bible also teaches — then it is impossible to possess an ounce of human compassion without wanting urgently for all people to know there is a way of escape from the wrath of God.
 - h) A sense of concern.
 2. A SENSE OF GRATITUDE. The more you get what Jesus did for you. the more you want everybody you know to find the treasure you found when you found Christ.
 - a) The earliest Christians were captivated by a love of God. The idea that God is love had never occurred in world history before the days of Jesus.
 - b) And it wasn't just an abstract love — it was as real, and flesh and blood, and bloody as an old rugged Cross. It was a self-sacrificing love. It was a demanding, costly, unparalleled love, displayed by the son of God at Calvary.
 - c) And it blew them away. They couldn't keep silent.
 - (1) *"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20)*
 - d) It made no sense for the early Christians to evangelize. It cost them everything. The gospel was hated. It was misunderstood and misrepresented.
 - e) But they were so smitten, so overwhelmed by the love of God they couldn't help themselves.
 3. So we have the meaning, the mission, the motives, and now, the methods of evangelism.
- D. Methods
1. When it comes to evangelistic methods, I vote for all of the above.
 2. It's really easy to criticize different methods.

3. When I first came to Neighborhood, I gathered our staff together, gave every person two Bibles to give away, and sent everybody out two by two to different trailer parks in town. Their job was to give away Bible, write down one or two prayer requests, and offer to pray.
 4. I would call that pre-evangelistic, more than evangelistic. Afterwards we all got together to debrief. Almost everybody had a great experience. People were touched that we would knock on their doors and ask if there was anything we could pray about.
 5. So I said that “almost” everybody had a good experience. There was one group that got the door slammed in their face.
 6. And later the argument was that people don’t want to be bothered. I totally agree. I don’t like it. Nobody likes it.
 7. And we do have to be wise.
 8. But there are some people where different strategies just work.
 9. One of the best evangelists I know was a crazy dude named Steve. He was tough as nails, a furniture mover, and a chain smoker. A messed up youth left him with a messed up mind. He was one of my buddies — and the guy I went to see Steven Segal movies with.
 10. Steve used take an easel, a chalkboard, and some chalk, go to downtown Chicago, set up his easel, light up a cigarette, and do this horrible chalk talk and share the gospel.
 11. Not for me, but it worked for him and people got saved.
 12. Personal conversations. Group rallies. Radio. Video. Leaflets. Big events. Quiet prayer. I’m a fan of everything that anybody is willing to do with integrity and respect.
 13. The most effective evangelist I ever knew was a lady named Lois Peterson. She was the Henrietta Mears of the midwest. She led thousands to Christ. How? She ran a Wednesday night Bible Class and just taught the Bible in a cramped, stinking, over-crowded, dirty basement in Chicago.
 14. When I was a kid in junior high, our church took us to O’Hare Airport to pass out little leaflets called “tracts.” Most people took them. Some threw them away.
 - a) Lifestyle evangelism. Attraction evangelism. Presence evangelism. Proclamation evangelism. Soul Winning. There are million models and all I say is pick one or two or then and do it.
 15. Here are two verses that guide me:
 - a) *I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22)*
 - b) *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:15-18)*
 16. Bottom line: every person and every church has to find what works for you, what fits with your culture, and then go for it.
 17. You might not speak the gospel, but you should know how to... more on that in a minute.
 18. But you can bring people to those who can speak the gospel. We’re a team. We all work together.
 19. The only way to do evangelism wrong is not to do it at all.
 20. So we have meaning, mission, motives, method, and the last thing I want to talk about is message.
- E. Message
1. I have a lot of energy around the message, because I think it gets messed up all the time. Most of the the time. The vast majority of the time.
 2. When we evangelize, we are basically communicating a packet of information. A packet of truth.
 3. That packet contains an irreducible minimum of very specific truths.
 4. Scripture is super clear:
 - a) *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)*
 - b) *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)*
 - c) *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4)*
 5. You’ve probably heard me talk about this before, but this is so important and we have to drill the fundamentals over and over again.
 6. Five monosyllables... Christ died for our sins. This is the gospel.
 - a) Christ died... that part is HISTORY. If you have been there, would have seen. You would have seen the beatings, seen the soldiers nail him to the cross. You would have seen the crown of thorns. You would have heard him cry out it is finished, and you would have seen him die and breathe his last. Christ died... that event is history. But what did it mean?
 - b) For our sins... that part is THEOLOGY. He died as a payment for our sins. He died in our place. This is the theology of substitutionary atonement. In theology, vicarious atonement. It means that his death counts for you. God punished him instead of punishing you. He was your scapegoat. He was your sacrifice. He was your lamb of God to take away the sin of YOU. When Jesus died, Your sins were transferred to him and judged. The one thing that kept you from God — the stain and guilt of sin — was paid in full.
 - c) There is nothing left to do but say yes to the gift.
 - d) What is the gospel? The gospel is that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and when he did that, he so completely satisfied the justice of God that you can be totally forgiven and embraced by God forever and ever... all because of him.
 7. So let’s get technical. The gospel has two sides...
 - a) The OBJECTIVE side: what Christ has done. (the FACTS of the gospel)
 - b) The SUBJECTIVE side: how a person responds. (FAITH)
 8. So, a complete act of evangelism communicates the basic facts of the gospel — this can take like two minutes.
 9. And then it goes further... it invites a person to believe in the Savior. The only biblical response is faith or believing. What is biblical faith?
 - a) Saving faith is claiming by personal choice and trusting exclusively in the finished work of Christ as my only hope for salvation.
 10. Scripture again is very clear:
 - a) *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13)*
 - b) *God has appointed him as the means of propitiation, a propitiation accomplished by the shedding of his blood, to be received and made effective in ourselves by faith. (Romans 3:25, Phil).*
 11. What the message is not.
 - a) Ask Jesus in your heart.
 - b) Commit your life to Christ.

- c) Give your life to Christ.
- d) Surrender.
- e) Make Jesus your Lord (master, boss, etc.)
- f) Change your life.

12. *The biblical language is simple: believe, trust, receive (John 1:12).*

13. That doesn't mean we're crabby or judgmental with how other people present the gospel. "Hey, you didn't use the right words!"

14. I've been around people like that.

15. Listen, if you're going to insist on grace, do it in a gracious way.

16. So it doesn't mean we're grace police.

17. But it does mean we're doing our best to keep the gospel of grace a gospel of pure grace and nothing but grace.

18. The truth is that people get saved when they turn to Jesus, no matter what language they use.

III. Year of Evangelism

A. This is a year of evangelism at Neighborhood. We're busting the budget. We just had 92 people come to the very first "Wouldn't You Like To Know" — this is a quarterly event on various topics. This topic was "Wills, Estates, and Trusts."

B. Why?

C. Because we care deeply about wills, estates, and trusts?

D. No.

E. Because we care deeply about lost people, and want to give you every possible reason to connect with them, and open the door, however slightly, to spiritual things.

F. We are working ourselves silly on Easter — just like we did on Christmas. Seven services. Countless hours of preparation and work.

G. Why?

H. Because we care about lost people, and there's at least a crack in the armor around Easter.

I. We're writing names on these clouds, and I hope you're praying for them... Why?

J. Because prayer sets the devil on his heels, and softens hearts to the gospel.

K. Next weekend will be devoted to evangelism training. We will equip you in all of our services from the pulpit... bringing in an expert in Evangelism Training named Larry Moyer.

L. And then Sunday evening, he will conduct two free seminars, starting at 6:00pm.

1. Session 1: What is so scary about evangelism and how do you overcome those fears?

2. Session 2: How to talk to your own relatives about spiritual things.

M. You will come away confident that when the moment comes, you can do it. You can lead a soul from death to life.

N. [I have so much more I can say about this, but I'll wrap it up by quoting the greatest evangelist of the last two generations, the late, great, Billy Graham:

1. [You know heaven is going to be the place of the final coronation of the King of kings. What a day that is going to be! The Bible says, "There will be written on Him, King of kings and Lord of lords." You and I are going to be present at the coronation of Jesus Christ when He is crowned King of the Universe. I am looking forward to that day. My seat is reserved. It was bought not with my silver and gold. It was bought with the blood of Christ on the Cross. What a day that is going to be. We are on our way to a better world.

2. [You know, The Times told this morning about Neil Armstrong who is scheduled to plant his foot on the moon at 2:17 a.m., on July 21. In yesterday's paper we saw pictures of Neil Armstrong practicing the landing of his craft so that he would be ready.

3. [Now, if you intend to set your feet in heaven, you are going to have to do a little practicing down here. You've got to rehearse by planting your feet on the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ.

4. [Which road are you on? Which direction are you traveling? Are going toward destruction or are you going toward Life? Which way? You can make the choice today. You can take the first step. Anybody can believe. Anybody can receive. Anybody can come in faith. He said, "Whosoever will, let him come." The offer is open to everyone here tonight. Will you come?

O. Billy Graham. One person led 3 million people to Christ.

P. We will never see another Billy Graham in our lifetime.

Q. So be it.

R. How about 3 million people each lead one person to Christ?

1. *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20, NKJV).*