

I. Introduction

A. Let's get right into Scripture:

1. *"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:37-38)*

B. My message today is my way of responding to a string of stories in our church. These are recent stories. And they all have a particular need in common. It is that need that motivates me to preach this message on this topic today.

C. Story 1:

1. A gentleman in our church recently received Jesus as his Savior. He is growing in the Lord, and walking through some very tough times in his life with a kind of grace that's awesome to see.
2. His friend has seen this man's grace under pressure, and he noticed something different in him... a rare combination of peace and power in these trials... So he asked if he could come over and find out what's making the difference.
 - a) We know it's a who, not a what, right?
3. As the friend was on his way over, the man called Pastor Tim, and said, "My friend is coming over and I want to tell him how to receive Jesus. What do I say?"
4. Tim told the man.
5. The man told his friend.
6. And a couple of hours later, Tim got the call... "My friend just prayed to receive Jesus."
 - a) This is the kind of stuff that God is doing at Pathway.

D. Story 2

1. A leader on the worship team calls Tim (again) with the same question. He's literally on a job site. "Tim, I've got a friend who wants to receive Jesus. What do I say?"
2. Tim starts going through it with him, and the worship leader says, "Hold on."
3. In the background Tim hears, "Hey Joe, come here a minute. Tim's gonna explain it."
4. So he puts Tim on speaker phone with this man. Sounds of the job site in the background. And this guy prays to receive Jesus.
 - a) Every single week.

E. Jesus said that every time even one person comes to salvation, heaven rejoices. They just threw two parties up there (Luke 15:7).

F. But that's not all. It's happening every week, multiple times. So much so, that when we tell our pastor-friends in other churches they think we're making it up.

G. And I'll tell you the main reason why it's happening here.

1. Because we have collectively prayed for over 60,000 homes in our community,
2. because we are currently praying for hundreds of names on those dots on the walls,
3. because Jesus said the fields are ripe for harvest so we should pray to the Lord of the harvest,
4. because God is answering those thousands of prayers, and
5. because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and we're dumb enough to say it...
 - a) So there's not a day that goes by without somebody at our church saying Welcome to God's Family, every single day, to God be all the glory.

II. Spiritual Hunger

A. It seems as if for the last 30 years, the tide of spiritual interest has been flowing out... with increasing rates of spiritual disinterest.

B. But there are signs that all that is about to change. God is awakening a spiritual hunger in our world today.

1. Every day, people go to Google and they ask, Is God real? They are asking that question at the rate of 200 times per second.
2. Studies show that 60 percent of your unsaved friends are open or very open to having a conversation with you about your faith. That's something new.

C. So, my goal in this message is to equip you. I want to give you what you need to explain the way of salvation to a friend, and — this is equally important — actually tie the knot.

1. And I've actually got 2 tools for you to use for this.

D. Here we go.

III. Title

A. My title today is: **Step Up to Sharing the Gospel**

B. So I've got who, how, and the what of sharing the Gospel.

IV. Message

A. **Who: Every believer has been sent by Jesus into a mission field uniquely designed for you.**

1. There are people who will hear you talk about Jesus, who will never in a million years hear me. Your personality. Your strengths. Your weaknesses. Even the places where you are messed up. You are the very best person to reach a certain audience that no one else can reach.
2. **Every Christian is:**
 - a) **A minister (Ephesians 4:12)**
 - b) **A priest (1 Peter 2:9)**
 - c) **A witness (Acts 1:8)**
 - d) **A missionary (John 20:21)**
 - e) **An ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20)**
 - f) **A living letter written by God to the world. (2 Corinthians 3:2)**
3. We can talk about the church gathered and the church scattered.

4. Today we are gathered. This is to worship God. And this is to get instructed, briefed, mobilized, equipped, and motivated for our mission.
5. Once we leave this place, we become the church scattered. Every school, every business, every neighborhood, every agency, every team, every classroom, the church scatters to become agents of grace and truth in a culture of confusion and pain.
6. The task of sharing the gospel is not just for pastors and preachers. It is not just for gifted evangelists; it's for us all.

B. How: We share the gospel the same way Jesus shared the gospel.

1. This is how the apostles and early Christians shared the gospel too.
2. So I'm talking about two ways:
 - a) **Normal conversations that just lead to spiritual things.**
 - (1) This is called friendship evangelism or lifestyle evangelism.
 - (2) It's a beautiful thing. But unfortunately friendship evangelism is not happening.
 - (3) I said that 60% of your unsaved friends are open to a conversation about spiritual things.
 - (4) But that same study says that 60% of unsaved people say they have a Christian friend who rarely or never talks about their faith. This means that lost people are more interested in hearing a conversation about Jesus than saved people are interested in having it.
 - b) **Intentional conversations where we gently bring up spiritual things.**
 - (1) My friend Steve, my Chicago buddy, told me how he did this last week. He has been praying for his neighbor, Mike. He decided to go over and talk to him about Jesus. He started by asking permission. Hey Mike, is it OK if we talk about Jesus for a minute? Mike said sure. Steve said, Mike, I have bad news and good news. Then he shared the bad news. Then he shared the good news. Then Mike prayed to receive Jesus. Then Steve texted me. Then we sent Steve 30 copies of our booklet, Welcome to God's Family and some Bibles too.
 - (2) We need some intentional conversations about faith. If you keep waiting for the subject to come up, I promise you, it's never going to happen.

3. In a minute, I'm going to show you an easy way to bring it up.

C. What: The simplest way of witnessing is by sharing the ABCs of the Gospel.

1. There are a lot of different formulas for sharing the gospel. I am a fan of all of them. Any one that works for you works for me. Use it.
 - a) But in case you don't have one, here you go. But wait. First, I want to define the word gospel.
2. Gospel
 - a) There are lots and lots of teachings in the Bible. Thousands. Hundreds of thousands. We would never say that somebody needs to know all of it in order to be saved. If that were the case, nobody would be saved.
 - b) The gospel is the name for a specific group of those teachings. Specifically, here is my definition of the Gospel.
 - (1) **The gospel is that irreducible subset of biblical truths that a person must hear, believe, and respond to in order to be saved.**
3. And when we study the word of God, we can boil down that irreducible subset of biblical truths to three.
 - a) There is a problem that a person must admit.
 - b) There is a solution that a person must understand and believe.
 - c) There is a response that a person must choose.
4. In other words, this is me saying that there is a theological underpinning for the simple ABC outline that we use for the gospel.
5. One of the tools that I have for you is this card. It has the ABCs on it. It has relevant Scriptures on it. It has a sample prayer on it.
 - a) Bonus: it's really small so you can carry it in your wallet or purse.
 - b) We made enough for everybody in our church to take one today. Do not take two. Just take one. If you know somebody else who should have one who is not here today, that's too bad for them. Seriously. Just take one. I'm not trying to be mean, but I do have my reasons.
 - c) If you use this card in a conversation about Jesus, you can give the card to another person, and next week you can come back and take two.
6. Now, here's a simple way to open this conversation:
 - a) Have you ever heard the ABCs of the Gospel (Good News)?
7. Just say that... because that's going to open an intentional conversation about the Gospel.
8. Now, I need to say something here that's very important.
 - a) We must never be pushy with the Gospel. You will make it harder for people who come after you. That is not our testimony.
 - (1) We are never bullies. We are never coercive. We are never insistent.
9. In the study of missionary work, called missiology, there is a very important principle that applies here. The principle is this:
 - a) Hold resistant fields lightly.
10. What that means is where missionaries are working and the people are resistant to the gospel, **BACK OFF**.
11. Keep a light presence in their lives, but back off. Let God work on them. They're not ready because they're not willing to be ready.
12. So, if you ask about the ABCs of the Gospel, and you sense any resistance at all, back off. God will work on them.
13. You can just say, "Hey, if you'd ever like to have that conversation, let me know."
14. OK let's go through the ABCs.

V. The Gospel

A. Admit: I have broken God's laws and need forgiveness from him.

1. Now the word for this is sin. But I'm going to advise you not to lead off with that word. Right away people are going to accuse me of being soft on sin. No, I just want to be clear on communication.
2. I don't like to dwell much on that word "sin". The reason why is because it's so greatly misunderstood. It has been distorted. So that what you mean by it is one thing, what they mean by it is quite another, and you're talking on two different wavelengths when you talk about sin. Therefore, I like to use much more meaningful language. I have broken God's laws. Or you can say, none of us has lived up to God's standards; we don't even live up to our own standards!
3. Nobody's going to argue with that.
4. Now, the Scriptures here do talk about sin, so we're not avoiding the topic. We're just being wise.
 - a) Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
 - b) Ecclesiastes 7:20 *For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.*
 - c) Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
5. Let the Bible make the case. Don't get into arguments.
6. So the gospel starts with something to admit. That we are rebels against righteousness and the moral order of God's universe.
7. There is a fundamental dualism -- a split -- that runs right down the middle of the human race. Some people are saved, which means they have deliberately, consciously tied the knot with God.
8. And everybody else is not saved, which means that the story of their lives is overshadowed by a great, unaccepted invitation from Almighty God. You cannot blur that line. You can admit your need to God today. Step one.

B. Believe: that Jesus died on the Cross for me so I could be forgiven.

1. The death of Jesus on the Cross is the centerpiece of cosmic history.
2. Jesus saved us, the Bible teaches, by dying on the cross for our sins.
 - a) We had a mom this week who told us that she was walking across our campus here and her young daughter was asking her questions about salvation. The mom was explaining to her girl how much God loved her and trying to keep everything real positive. She actually said she was avoiding the heavy stuff of Jesus dying on the cross.
 - b) But her daughter wasn't satisfied. She knew something was missing. And she kept pressing and pressing with questions.
 - c) Finally, the Mom realized that she needed to explain that Jesus died on the cross for her daughter to bring her back to God. And right away that's when the lights came on for her little girl. And her little girl prayed to receive Jesus.
3. This is super important.
 - a) **There is no such thing as a Cross-less Gospel.**
 - b) If the cross of Christ is not the centerpiece of your communication, then whatever you are saying is not the gospel.
4. The Cross. The Blood of Christ. The Crucifixion. His sacrifice. His substitutionary death. However you say it, you have to say that Christ died for our sins.
5. The Scriptures we use:
 - a) Ephesians 1:7 *He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.*
 - b) Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
6. So we have something to admit. Something to believe. Now, something to choose.

C. Choose: to put my faith in Jesus and receive him as my Savior.

1. The Gospel involves every part of a person.
 - a) To admit that you've broken God's laws, that part happens in your conscience.
 - b) To believe that Jesus died on the Cross for your sins, that part happens in your mind.
 - c) Now, to choose to receive Jesus and trust in him, that part happens in your will. Your free will.
2. Scriptures
 - a) John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
 - b) John 1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*
3. It's faith, not works.
 - a) It's faith, not changing your life.
 - b) It's faith, not getting religious.
 - c) It's faith, not stopping your sins.
 - d) It's faith, not giving God anything.
 - e) It's faith, not baptism, confirmation, confession, or communion.
 - f) It's faith, not human effort, human performance, human anything.
4. The issue here is faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Only Hope. To trust in Jesus. To rest the weight of your confidence on him.
 - a) Everybody has faith. Faith is simple. Faith is easy. It is effortless.
 - b) Faith is the most automatic response of the human spirit.
 - c) The problem with an unsaved person is not the lack of faith.
 - d) The problem is that their faith is in the wrong thing. When we share the gospel, we are using the power of God's word to help lost people redirect their faith from anything and anyone else so that they can point it all toward Jesus Christ crucified for their sins and risen again.

5. Every single time you explain these ABCs with anybody, the Holy Spirit is right there with you working in, and upon, that person. Wherever the gospel goes, the spirit of God goes. If you want to see the Holy Spirit at work, share the gospel. You will see the miracle of new birth.
 - a) I do not like to tell anybody to ask Jesus into their heart. That language is too metaphorical and it doesn't make sense.
 - b) I do not like to tell anybody to commit their life to Christ, or to give their life to Christ. That language shifts the burden back onto our shoulders. As if it is our commitment or our giving that saved us. No, it is Jesus in his commitment to give his life that is our salvation.
 - c) But I don't want us to be so freaked out that we're going to get it wrong that we don't say anything. Honestly, I don't really care what you say as long as you get the cross of Christ in there and invite a person to respond right then and there, God is going to save them if they are willing.
6. It's as if every day God holds out a gift to you:
 - a) I will forgive you, if you will only believe.
 - b) I will adopt you into my forever family, if you will only believe.
 - c) I will robe you in the goodness of Christ, counting his goodness as yours, if you will only believe.
 - d) I will build for you a mansion in heaven, I will accept you, just as you are, I will come and live inside you, and make you the person you dream of becoming, if you will only believe.
 - e) I will fill you with my love, my peace, and my joy, if you will only believe.
 - f) I will give you the gift of eternal life, if you will only believe.
 - g) I will protect you as my own precious child, I will walk with you in dark times, set a feast before you in troubled times, defend you in perilous times, celebrate with you in good times, and bring you to heaven at the end of your time, if you will only believe.
7. Sometimes people will object: that's too easy, they say.
 - a) That's how you know you did it right.
8. And you can say, it's only easy for you because it was so painfully hard for Jesus.
9. So now, you have explained the ABCs of the gospel. And now it's time to tie the knot; it's time to make it official.
 - a) You can ask them, would you like to do this? Would you like to make it official?
10. If they say yes, then move on.
11. If they say no, or express hesitancy, that's okay. You have not failed. Here's why: people get saved by being nudged toward salvation. Bit by bit. A conversation here. A book there. Another conversation. A sermon. A prayer. Bit by bit... and even if they don't want to pray right then and there, it's still a good thing, because you've nudged them closer to Jesus.

VI. Prayer

- A. Here is the sample prayer on this little card.
- B. You could lead them in your own prayer, lead them in this prayer, or just give them this card and have them pray it out loud. I like out loud. It's not required, but it's more concrete that way.
 1. **ADMIT**
 - a) God, I admit, I have broken your laws and have disobeyed you. I have sinned, and I need forgiveness from you.
 2. **BELIEVE**
 - a) God, I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me. I believe you punished him for my sins, instead of punishing me, and I thank you. Jesus alone can bring me back to you. I believe, Lord. So...
 3. **CHOOSE**
 - a) God, right now, I choose to believe in Jesus, as my savior, and only hope. I officially receive Jesus and the gift of salvation he brings. Because of him, I'm asking you, please, save me, forgive me, and make me your child forever. Amen.

VII. Give them something....

- A. I said we had two tools for you. The first one is this little ABC card. And the second one is our booklet, Welcome to God's Family.
- B. I have to say that this booklet is really popular and a lot of people want to take it. You cannot. This is not a free-for-all. This is for a person only if you just received Jesus as your savior. I know we have some people who tried to collect the different covers as souvenirs. Please don't. Actually we pay for these books and it costs us money, and we are super happy to give them as a gift to every person who receives Jesus.
- C. If you want your own copy, you can grab one from Amazon, or go to gracepathway.com.
 1. So here's the offer. If you use this card to lead somebody to Jesus, give them the card and tell them you're going to get a booklet for them next time you see them.
 2. Then, next time you come to church, go to the Hub or the prayer team and you can pick up one of these booklets. Now you have a reason to go back to your friend and continue the conversation.
 - a) Give them the book.
 - b) Have them sign and date the back.
 - c) Offer to go through it with them over coffee.
 3. Plus, you can now pick up two more cards for your next conversations about faith.
- D. Last week, I talked about Stepping Up to Your Hero's Journey.
- E. Remember?
- F. This is it. Look around you. You're seeing 4,500 heroes stepping into every shop and classroom and neighborhood in this city to say *Jesus loves you, Christ died for you, believe and be saved*.
- G. I can't wait for you, some day soon, to be able to say, "Welcome to God's Family."
- H. Now, Go be somebody's hero.