

Our topic over the last several weeks has been “The Art of Thriving.” Jesus promised an abundant life to those who receive Him and walk in his ways. The Art of Thriving is knowing and trusting that God has great plans for those who align their lives with the life He has laid them. We’re talking about living the life you were meant to live. It’s you being your “BEST SELF!” Your real self. Your most authentic self. Thriving means rising above fears.

Have you ever neglected to do something because you were afraid? Fearful that you might not do it well? Afraid that things wouldn’t work out, as you wanted it to? Sometimes we miss out on what is best in life because we let fear get the best of us! If fear gets our BEST everything else is less than best. In a way sometimes we give in to our fears and merely survive and in doing so we miss out on God’s Very best for us! We can choose “good” things because they are easy or the least path of resistance but we pass up of the Best because of fear. God doesn’t want us to merely survive, He created us to Thrive!

20 Years ago I was riding home with a buddy after a softball tournament. I was 27 years old, working a full-time Job and raising my little brother. I was a Youth Ministry Intern at my Church in Paradise and at the end of Summer I was heading back to school to pursue full-time ministry. My Buddy asked me if there were any girls at the church that I was interested in. I told him, “Not really.” I LIED! So he kept pressing. I told him that I was leaving for school and I didn’t have time for a relationship...which was true. But deep down on the inside I was eyeballing a girl that I would have loved to date! I told him that there was only one person I would consider dating if I were to stick around and not go back to school. I told him her name was Gina Gibson. He said, oh I know her! Her parents are in my small group. Then he said you have a week! A week for what? He went on to say you have one week to ask her out or Ill ask her out for you! Yeah right Bob! Then he quietly said under his breath, you have 1 week. The conversation changed and that was that.

Exactly one week later I received a call from Bob. I thought he was calling to invite me to another softball tournament. He wasn’t. I said what’s up Bob? He said, What did she say? What did who say about what? What did Gina say when you asked her out? Dude, I told you I wasn’t going to ask her out because I was heading off to school. Again I LIED! I didn’t ask her out because I was scared to death that she would say NO! I was afraid that I wasn’t good enough for her. Then he said well I call you right back. For what? I told you that if you didn’t ask her out, I was going to ask her out for you! NO! NO! NO! I told you I would. I said OK, Ill call her! So he said call me back and let me know what she says. So I hung up the phone and began to pace back and forth in my Youth Pastor’s office. I got an instant adrenalin rush! You would of thought I was pumped up for a football game! When I got pumped for a football game, I was getting ready for a WAR!!! I’m not so sure how long it took me to muster up the courage to call but I did. The phone rang and someone answered, I asked for Gina and the voice on the other end say this is her. You would have thought time stood still at that moment! I hear myself say, “this is Danny Basham,” she says “I know!” In my head I’m like, “Wait what???” “How does she know its me?” I’ve never talked with her on the phone before. At this point I not sure I have ever had a personal conversation with her. Then I thought, “BOB! YOU CALLED HER!!!!” Then I asked, “How did you know it was me?” She said I just recognized your voice. Oh, OK! The reason I’m calling is to ask if you would be open to going to dinner and a movie sometime? Then I hear, “Yes, that sounds like fun!” SHE SAID YES!!! You would have thought fireworks began to explode in my head!!! So being the really cool guy that I am, I said great, Ill talk to you later and hung up the phone! NOOOOOO! What an idiot! When are you going to the movie, what are you going to see? Where does she like to eat? Again when is this supposed to happen???? Such a Dork!!! So I pick up the phone and call her back and sort out the details of our first date! We went to the Olive Garden for dinner and watched Air Force One! This last week we celebrated 18 years of marriage!!!

By now, I'm guessing that some of you are saying to yourself, "What a Dork!" "Funny story but where is he going with this?" Well here is where I'm going with this. If any of you know my wife Gina, you know she is an amazing lady. I'll be the first to tell you that she was and is way out of my league. She is one of the greatest gifts the Lord has blessed me with! The reason I tell you this is because if I would have listened to my fear or neglected to ask her out because I didn't exactly know how to do it, I would have missed out on one of Gods greatest blessing in my life! Waiting and not dating would have been a good thing, But deep down I knew waiting was not the BEST thing for me to do and if I would have given into my fear I would miss out on Gods BEST for my life! Sometimes "GOOD" things can keep us from the "BEST" things God has for us!

As we wrap up our series on the Art of Thriving, We are going to look at something that I believe is very close to God's heart. We are going to talking about Intentional Outreach. The importance of intentionally looking for ways to share the Gospel with those around us. Another way to say it is Evangelism! Or pointing people to Jesus. Sharing our faith with others. Sharing the "Good News" Helping people find and follow God. Or simply put, Sharing the Gospel!

It is believed that: more than 95% of Christians have never led another person to Christ! That is far too high of a percentage. The top 2 limiting factors that keep us from sharing the Gospel are:

Fear & Feeling like you do not know how share gospel

What is the Gospel???

Is the Gospel forgiveness? Is it centering your life around God rather than on yourself? Is the gospel the entire Bible? If I were to ask each of you to define the Gospel by completing this sentence: "The Gospel is . . ."

If I had you share your answers out loud we would be all over the map. I believe this is one of the reason we fear sharing it Gospel. We don't want to contradict what others may say the Gospel is. I wonder if we just think the Gospel is just to complicated to share? Frankly we just don't know exactly what the Gospel is. Every church we have ever attended defines the Gospel in slightly a different way. So what is the Gospel? Let's let the scripture itself answer that question.

Open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15:1-6a Moreover, brethren, I declare to you *the gospel* which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² *by which* also *you are saved*, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that *(is)* Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once.

In verse 8 Paul goes on to say that he too was an eyewitness. The 4 verbs of the Gospel: Christ DIED, was Buried, Rose, and was SEEN! Christ Died according to the Scriptures, Proof of death was that He was buried. We do not bury alive people. Christ Rose from the dead according to the scriptures, Proof of life was that he was SEEN. Hopefully we don't see to many people walking around after they have been buried! So, what is the Gospel by which we are saved is . . . Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead! The Bible is a library of books but the Gospel is one sentence. Whenever we share the gospel we need to be clear! The Gospel by which we are saved is Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead!

God's heart has always been and continues to be consumed with a passion to save lost people. He came to seek and to save the Lost. According to the scripture we are dead in our sins and transgressions, and we are made alive in Christ Jesus! But How does God continue to seek and pursue lost? Let's let the Bible tell us how: Romans 10: 14-16 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? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace.” So how does God continue Seek and Save lost people, through people willing to share the Gospel! People like you and me who have experienced the Grace of God. God has enlisted us, He has appointed us to saved to be His ambassadors. He has giving us the ministry of reconciliation. Partnering with God as He reconciles the Lost to Himself. God uses the Gospel and people willing to share it to reach the lost, least and lonely!

One of my favorite Parables in the Bible that Jesus taught is found in Luke 14: Jesus tells parable of a great feast: A certain man hosted a great feast and invited many. When the feast was ready the Master sent his servant to tell the invited guest that everything was ready. But one by one they came up with with excuses as to why they could not attend the feast. So a little irritated and angry, this is what the Master does. Picking up the story in Luke 14:21-23:

²¹ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’²² And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ ²³ Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Do you hear the sense of urgency of the Master?

Go out quickly, as if to say that the clock is ticking. Go OUT and Bring IN! Go OUT and COMPEL THEM to COME IN! He is concerned with all people but His focus is on the ones who know they don’t deserve to attend this great feast. He challenges the servants to not just invite them but to COMPEL Them!

I love the response of the servant: He didn’t pull a Moses and say but I can’t speak. He didn’t pull a Jeremiah and say I’m too young, I can’t be your prophet. He didn’t pull a Danny Basham and say I can’t preach, I’m terrified of public speaking! He didn’t pull a _____ (put your name in there) along with whatever excuse you give God for not sharing your faith with others! No! The servant says: Master, It is done as you commanded!

The Master sends the servant back out! Do what ever it takes to bring them in! This is a beautiful picture of God’s Grace: God doing for others what they cannot do for themselves! God inviting all of humanity from the beginning of time to enjoy His presence and to enjoy the abundance of life. Humanity, breaking off the engagement and wrecking it for everybody! And God sending His servant (Jesus, His One and Only Son) to extend an open invitation to all who at this point who do not and will never deserve to attend this feast to freely come! And now God continues to use His servants, all who believe, to go out into the broken world compelling the lost, who cannot save themselves, that God desires to save them through the Gospel.

Today, I would like to share with you 3 Compelling reasons to partner with God in sharing the Gospel.

1. Sharing the Gospel aligns your heart with GOD’S HEART. God’s heart is not FOR evangelism, it IS evangelism. God is the evangelist. His mind and heart are always on reaching those who do not know Him. He never rests, He doesn’t take time off, and He is always pursuing the redemption of all mankind. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, there has been a cosmic war being waged between God and His Angels of Heaven and satan and the demons of hell for the souls of all humanity. God’s heart is that none would perish! Again God’s heart is not FOR evangelism, Gods heart IS Evangelism.

2. When we share the Gospel, we are actively engaging in CHRIST'S MISSION. Christ stepped out of His comfort zone of Heaven and entered our broken world only to become broken for it. Luke 19:10 - For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost. The word tells us that Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Jesus died the death we deserved so that we could have His life, which we could not earn and will never deserve. He did not come to condemn us and send us to hell; He came to save us from our current hell-bound state! All of this motivated by His great love for us! For God so loved the world that He gave His son to die for it! Christ gave so we could receive! Listen to John 1:12 ^{“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. By believing, undeserved sinners became members of God family! Christ was and is on Mission and He has enlisted ALL believers to partner with Him in the redemption of humanity. What an incredible gift to receive and incredible privilege we have to partner in Christ's mission. Not only has He invited us to participate in His mission, He has commanded us to it!
3. We have the opportunity to make an ETERNAL INVESTMENT. Apart from Christ, we did not have life. Now, as believers, Christ's life has become our life. It is His life that lives through us. God does not want us to just spend our life; He wants us to invest it in things that have eternal significance. The investment that God invites us to is people...your friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers. Jesus promises to give those who trust in Him eternal life. He chooses to use His people equipped with His word to share the Gospel by which people would be saved. We have the opportunity to invest our lives with great eternal significance.

This is only 3 of many compelling reasons to partner with God in fulfilling Christ's mission to seek and to save the lost. When we understand these compelling reasons for being intentional in sharing the Gospel . . . I mean, when we can recite them off the top of our heads . . . what I really mean is when the truth of these compelling reasons makes its way down mankind's longest and most treacherous road. I'm talking about the road from our head to our heart! We will begin to confront the fear that keeps us from experiencing GOD'S BEST for our lives. We will begin to THRIVE in life and experience the ABUNDANT life Christ has given us!

Let me close with this:

God is at work in you aligning your heart with His. Christ has invited, commissioned and commanded you to carryout His mission for seeking and saving the lost. God wants you to know the eternal value and significance of your life. God did not create you to just survive; He created you to thrive in life! As you assimilate these compelling reasons for sharing the Gospel, your FEAR can be a springboard into FAITH and the FAITHFULNESS of the One living in you and through you will lead to FRUITFULNESS! Because of His great love for you, Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried and He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

THIS IS THE GOSPEL!

Do you know someone who needs to know the Gospel?

Share it with them!