

Should Christians Push Their Beliefs on Others?

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[0 : 0 0] All right, we're going to transition now. We're going to go back into our series that we've been going into, which is Believable, Answering Tough Questions. We've been in the series now for the last kind of seven weeks or so, and we're almost done.

But it's a topical series that we're doing. It's a little different than what we normally do, which is preach through books of the Bible. This series has been designed just to try to help you with some of the tough questions, questions that we get asked as pastors, questions that we face ourselves as pastors.

And so we came up with eight or nine of these tough topics. Let's just spend some time trying to answer them, trying to help you. So far along the way, we've looked at everything from like, is God unfair?

Can you really trust the scriptures? Why does God allow so much suffering? Should Christians care about politics? Does Christianity shame people? Why do Christians care about the sanctity of your life? Think about abortion.

Things like that. Can we trust that God is good with so much violence in the Bible and other things like that? We've looked at a bunch of these kinds of things. And if you're just checking this out for the first time, you can go listen to all that or watch all those on our app or on the website.

[1 : 1 0] Next week, we're going to be looking at why do Christians care so much about sex and gender? And this week, we're going to look at the subject of evangelism. And essentially, the question is really, should Christians push their beliefs on others?

You know, maybe you're here and you're not yet a follower of Jesus. You're just here because you're just checking this whole thing out. And you would resonate with that. Like, man, it just feels like they're so pushy. I wish I could push their beliefs on everybody, right?

So we'll get to, like, the pushiness side of it here in just a minute. But this, like, this sharing our beliefs with others thing is really the topic of evangelism. And so let me just start by talking about that, right?

What is evangelism? Well, evangelism simply means to share good news. That's what the word means, to share good news. Now, evangelism came out of the context of sharing the good news of the gospel.

The gospel, that word gospel means good news. And the gospel was first used to describe, you know, it was a word that used to describe news. But Christians picked that word up right away because we were sharing the good news of the finished work of Jesus.

[2 : 1 3] His life, his death, his resurrection. And so evangelism is supposed to be about bringing the good news of the finished work of Jesus. You know, and how we get salvation and we get to follow Jesus and all those things, right?

Like, I say supposed to be because the term has been corrupted. And so I want to just briefly talk about that because, again, if you're just new or checking this whole thing out, you hear the word evangelism and you might think, you know, rightly try to connect it to the word evangelical. And that word has become a whole other thing. In our little part of the world in the South, in our moment in time, the word evangelical seems to most often be used to talk about political things, especially in election years.

You get story after story about evangelicals this and evangelicals that. And how do we get the evangelical vote? And it's just, it's like, it's become in our culture. Like, when we think about evangelism or evangelical, we think about politics.

This is a word that was originally used to describe Christians who shared the good news of Jesus and now it's been muddied with politics. And that, in and of itself, should make us really sad and

angry, I think.

[3 : 26] And that's not meant to sound political. That's just, that's meant to sound Christian. The good news of Jesus is infinitely better than any other news. This is not the first time this has happened by any means.

This has happened all throughout history where people seek to attach Jesus to their own agenda. Powerful people want to attach Jesus to their own agendas, their own platforms.

And so, in our modern moment, Jesus gets attached to all kinds of politicians and their talking points and their agendas and all the rest. But that is not what evangelism is. And it's not what it's supposed to be.

It's supposed to be purely about us, our dedication to sharing the goodness of Jesus. If you want to understand something, you go back to the source. And I just think it's worth noting, too, that, like, Jesus started his earthly ministry with evangelism.

In Mark 1, the opening words of Jesus in this ministry are verse 14 and 15, where it says, Jesus came into Galilee and he proclaimed the gospel of God. And he said this, The time is fulfilled.

[4 : 27] The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel. Similarly, in Matthew 4, Jesus says, From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And in Luke 4, we get a little bit more fleshed out. Jesus goes into the temple. He gets the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolls it and he reads these words. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And Jesus rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant.

He sits down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Jesus' opening words for his ministry were, I'm here to bring good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty for the captives, liberty for the oppressed, to proclaim to you the Lord's favor.

Repent and believe the gospel. Now those words repent and believe are really necessary. Repent means to turn away from like something and run in the other directions, to do a 180 and turn and run the other direction.

[5 : 44] And this is Jesus saying, you turn your back on your way of living, you living like you're the king, living for yourself, living for sin. You turn and you run from that. But we don't just turn and run away from sin.

We believe, repent and believe. And that believe means to run to Jesus. So we don't just run away from sin. We run to Jesus. We see him. We turn to him. We run to him. We follow him.

So again, at the origins, this is what evangelism is supposed to be about, right? In this series we've been in, is actually a kind of series on evangelism because, you know, we've been trying to help you know how to do this.

I've used this verse a lot in this series. We've used it a lot. First Peter 3, 15, always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that's in you. We've tried to help you in this series to not just answer your questions, but to know how to answer other people's questions.

How do you, with all these different tough topics, how do you step into those conversations and give a reason for the hope that's in you? And yet with gentleness and respect, as Peter says.

[6 : 45] This gets at the heart of what evangelism is. It's sharing the hope that is in us, what Jesus has done, right? And so each week we've touched on different things, difficult things, in an effort to try to help you see how good Jesus is and how to share that goodness with others.

But a new question is arising, and that is, should we do this? Should we do this? Should Christians actually share their faith? One way to ask this question is, is evangelism morally wrong?

Is it morally wrong? Now, in case you're like, why would we even think that? What does that even mean? Let me just tell you about a recent study that was done by the Barna Group. They're statisticians, and they produce a lot of pretty incredible, helpful statistics and things that can help us understand how things are going.

And this recent report showed some shocking trends. Firstly, this is about millennials, by the way. That's those who were born in 1981 through 1996. So that's old people like myself, born millennials.

And the study didn't get into like Gen Z or subsequent generations, but we can assume that this is getting worse, not better. So encouraging numbers were this.

[7 : 54] 96% of evangelical or Christian millennials said that they thought part of their faith means being a witness about Jesus, that like Jesus would want me to do this, right?

Pretty much all of us agreed. 96% agreed. 94% surveyed said that the best thing that could ever happen to someone, I mean, just think about that statement.

Not that they'd win the lottery or get married or have kids or, no, the best thing that could ever happen. 94% said that the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to come to know Jesus.

Wow. So 96% of the Christians my age said, we think that, you know, Jesus would want us to do this. 94% said, and we think it's the best thing that could ever happen to somebody.

More than that, 73% of these same people, which is more than any of the other previous generations that have been surveyed, 73% said they felt they had the ability to answer their friends' questions about Christianity.

[8 : 54] This is like sounding like very good news, right? Except for this next number. And this is insane. 47%, so basically half of the exact same group who's just said all of the above, 47% said this.

They agreed that it was at least somewhat morally wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they would one day share the same faith. This is astounding.

Basically 100% of the Christians surveyed said, we think we're supposed to do this. You know, Jesus would want us to. We think it would be the best thing that ever happened to somebody.

Three quarters of them said, I think I've got the goods to have those kinds of conversations with my friends and neighbors.

But half of them said, well, I think it's morally wrong. Now, Christians have done a lot of damage and Christianity's done a lot of damage, so to speak, but we've tried to deal with that throughout the series.

But does that mean it's morally wrong to share our faith? I want to point to a couple of pictures in the scriptures. In Matthew 5, Jesus says in verse 14, you are the light of the world.

[10 : 01] A city on a hill cannot be hidden. And he uses this strange analogy to us. He says, do people light a lamp and put it under a basket? Now, that's a weird one for us because we just flip switches and lights are always on or you can clap if you've got that thing still around or whatever, you know.

We take for granted light, but this is speaking to a Jewish custom at the time where they would light a lamp, they put it in an elevated place because they didn't have power. And light would shine through a dark house and everyone in the home would be able to see.

Jesus said, in the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. So, is it morally wrong to provide light for people who are lost in darkness?

Jude uses, I think, a very powerful illustration here. In verse 22 and 23, he says, have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them from the fire.

Snatching them. Just very aggressive. I have spent the last seven or eight years serving as a chaplain for Morehead City Fire and EMS, and I have gone through a ton of structure fires.

[11 : 11] And a lot of those fires have been in the middle of the night, two or three o'clock in the morning. You know, it's not a convenient time for your house to burn down ever, but it seems to happen in the middle of the night, which is terrifying. And I've been there seeing families flee out of their homes with like nothing, you know, terrified.

And you know what? I've never thought, you know, standing there like watching this whole thing transpire, I've never thought, gosh, I don't know, it feels a little morally wrong to be doing this. You know, like, you know, when the firefighter runs in, you know, I've seen this, kick doors down, go in, find that person, and drag them out.

I've watched it happen. And I've never thought, oh, I don't know, did we know if they wanted, maybe they wanted to be in the burning house. Has anyone considered that? Or while we're spraying like, you know, the tens of thousands of gallons of water all over the house, like, ah, did they want their stuff wet?

I don't know. Like, is it morally wrong? Like, it would be ridiculous to think like this. Right? No, these are heroes. And Jude says, yeah, that's what you should do.

Snatch them out of the fire. And so, friends, I guess to the question of, is it morally wrong? I would say, if you believe what you say you believe, it's morally wrong not to.

[12 : 26] It's morally wrong not to. It's like a firefighter sitting on the yard going, I don't know. No, it's like, it's our obligation. Now, there are wrong ways to evangelize. There are wrong ways to do this.

And I think that's contributed to some of this, is it morally wrong kind of thing, right? Because we've seen it done so poorly. We'll get to some of that in a minute. I mean, Peter says, yet with gentleness and respect. He's writing, Peter is writing in 1 Peter 2, what he refers to in chapter 1 as elect exiles. And it means that they're elect, they're chosen by God, they're saved by God, but they're exiles, which means this world is not their home. That's us. We are loved by God, chosen by God, but this world is not our home.

But for the meantime, God has put us here for a purpose. The fact is, though, no one wants to be in exile. We don't want to be exiles. And so we tend to act out in ways where we feel justified, right?

I'll give you an example. A conservative political figure some years back at a conference that kind of branded itself as like a Christian conservative political conference said this to the audience, I would assume most or all of which would have considered themselves Christians.

[13 : 40] He said this, and I quote, we've turned the other cheek, we, the conservative kind of like political community, we've turned the other cheek. And he says, and I understand, sort of, he adds, thankful for that.

I understand, sort of, the biblical reference, he says. I understand the mentality of turning the other cheek. But then he adds this, but it's gotten us nothing. It's gotten us nothing, this turning the other cheek thing.

And the crowd just erupts in applause. Yeah, yeah, it's gotten us nothing. Now, friends, I would just point out that that's not a biblical reference. That is a command of Jesus to turn the other cheek.

It's not a political, it's not a biblical reference. It's not some random thing from somewhere in the Bible. It is a teaching of Jesus. Jesus speaking to a culture where they were persecuted for their faith and told them, you are not able to retaliate.

You are to turn the other cheek. Just because times are tough doesn't mean we get to change the rules on how we do these things. We are always meant to remember the ways of Jesus, to deal with gentleness and respect.

[14 : 46] So that's to the morally wrong thing. I guess another thing is, do we have to? Do we have to do this? Do Christians have to do this, right? Is evangelism optional for Christians, right?

Like who has to do this? Now evangelism, I should have said this earlier, but by the way, evangelism is something that every human being does. I don't mean like evangelism about Jesus, but I mean sharing good news.

It's just something we all do. All of us are sharing all the time the good news of something. It might be a product or a belief or a political ideal or a restaurant that we found that we really love or a diet plan or a workout thing.

I mean, you know, what's the number one rule of CrossFit? Talk about CrossFit, right? Become a CrossFit evangelist, you know? Look, I am like the king of this. And so I would not be, I don't wanna call you out.

I'm this guy, right? I get excited about something, I can't shut up about it. We all do that. We all do that. Like we're always telling people around us what we think the gospel is, what we think the good news is, where we think the good life is found, right?

[15 : 51] But like to Christian evangelism, like telling people about the goodness of Jesus, who's supposed to do that? I grew up in, when I was going to church as a kid, I grew up with like traveling evangelists would come through and they'd be like, and they were always sweating.

I don't know why, but they were very sweaty. I remember that. I was a kid, I remember like, man, they are like, someone should like, give them a hanky or something, you know? Very passionate. And we get, the goal was, you knew this was coming weeks out. You've got everybody you knew who didn't believe in Jesus, you gotta get them there because that guy was gonna get them, you know? Get them, get them, sick them, you know? Is evangelism something that, yeah, those guys, or missionaries.

Missionaries should definitely do this. I mean, you know, we give them money, we send them to another country, they better be doing this, you know? Evangelism is something that preachers do, right? Yeah, yeah, those are the preachers and probably even some church staff, they should do that.

Extroverts, yes. Evangelism is something that the extroverts should do. Definitely them, right? You see where this is going. Actually, evangelism is something that all Christians should do.

[17:00] I mean, Jesus gave what's been called the Great Commission in Matthew 28. He says this, he's actually risen from the dead, so he's got their attention, having come back from the dead and all.

And he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. That word nations is ethnos, it's people groups, subcultures. Fill every neighborhood, everything.

Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all that I've commanded you. This has been rightly, some authors said years ago, it's the Great Commission, not a good suggestion.

This is what all followers of Jesus are supposed to do. Now, sure, this was written, first said to this group of disciples, this first group of disciples who'd spent so much time with Jesus, walking with him for three years.

But the goal should be for all of us, as we follow Jesus, we get better and better at this, more and more confident in this. But that doesn't get us off the hook right away because story after story in the Gospels, you see people who meet Jesus, encounter Jesus, are changed by Jesus, immediately start proclaiming how good Jesus is.

[18:07] A woman in John 4 meets Jesus at a well. She's got this crazy, broken, shameful past. I mean, shameful past. And right away, she tells her whole town. A man in Mark 5 is healed from a legion of demons.

He's been tormented. He is a terror to everyone else. And he meets Jesus, and right away he goes, and he tells, it says, the whole region. Two blind men get healed. I think it's in John 9.

And they go tell the entire district about Jesus. I mean, over and over again, we see this, right? And so I guess it's just worth considering if you say you follow Jesus, but don't tell people about Jesus, kind of if not, why not?

If not, why not? Charles Spurgeon, one of my heroes, said this. He said these words. These are not easy words, but worth considering. He said, once more, he who really has this high esteem of Jesus will think much of him.

And as his thoughts are sure to run over at the mouth, he will talk much of him. The thinking about Jesus will lead to, it'll just spill out of your mouth. He says, do we so? If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep the good news, your good news to yourself.

[19:16] You will be whispering it in your child's ear. You'll be telling it to your husband. You'll be earnestly imparting it to a friend. Without the charms of eloquence, I love that, you will be more than eloquent.

Your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of his sweet love. And he says these hard words. Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter. I recollect that.

You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all. Because it cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him.

Again, go back to just, that's human nature. We talk about what we love. He says, the man who says, I believe in Jesus, but doesn't think enough of Jesus to ever tell another about him, is an imposter.

If thou knowest Christ, thou art as one who has found honey, thou will call others to taste of it. Be wise in your generation, and speak of him in fitting ways, and at fitting times.

[20:13] And so in every place, proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul. We live in a moment where we can barely eat a slice of pizza without posting it on social media.

We know how to evangelize. We know how to tell, no one has to browbeat us to do it. No one has to manipulate us to do it. We just do it. We can't help it.

And that's, I love that logic. Spurgeon says, if you're thinking about him, it will just fall out of your mouth. It will fall out of your mouth. You can't, no one's going to have to force you.

It'll just happen. The more Jesus is beautiful to you, the more you'll tell people about him. And so if not, I guess the question is, why not? Right?

Why not? I love that that quote, it gets to the obligation and the duty that we have as Christians, which I think is necessary to deal with and talk about. But I love also that it speaks of the beauty. [21 : 08] And so let me just, this is, I think, often missed. Evangelism is a duty. It is an obligation for all Christians. It is a duty, but it's also a beautiful privilege. Too often, and this is probably already happening.

I won't ask for a show of hands because we don't want to shame each other. Right? But like too often, what happens in this conversation is you start thinking, I know I should do this more. I know, I know, I know. You feel a sense of shame. Okay, I'll do it.

I'll do it. I'll do it. Shut up. I'll do it. Okay? Right? This kind of like, I know I should. I'll do it. Okay, I'll do it. I'll do it. I'll do it. And that is very similar to how my kids respond when I tell them to go clean their room.

Right? I know, I should do it. I'll do it. Okay, I'll do it. Just shut up already. I'll do it. They don't say that, but I can see it. They feel it. Right? And yes, we should do it.

Right? But like, what's lost oftentimes is the massive privilege it is to do what this, what we're talking about here, to share our faith. Martin Lloyd-Jones, another one of mine, just heroes, said these words, regarding that Matthew 5, 14 passage I read earlier, you know, you're the light of the world.

[22 : 14] Listen to these words that Lloyd-Jones says in his brilliant commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He says in verse 14, that's, you're the light of the world. Surely you have one of the most astounding and extraordinary statements about the Christian that was ever made.

Even by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. It's a statement full of significance and profound implications with regard to understanding of the nature of the Christian life. You, said our Lord, looking out, if you don't know anything about the people who follow Jesus, that was a motley crew, looking out upon those simple people, those entirely unimportant people from the standpoint of the world, rejects from every walk of life, outcasts, fishermen, poor people.

He said, looking at them, Jesus said, you are the light of the world. Looked at them and said, it's you. You're the light of the world.

Boyd Jones goes on to say, it's one of those statements which should have the effect upon us of making us lift up our heads, causing us to realize once more what a remarkable and glorious thing it is to be a Christian.

You, you're the light of the world. Acts 4.13 has been like a, kind of a banner past verse for us as a church through all the years.

[23 : 40] It's where they say that they recognize that the disciples were, quote, unschooled, ordinary men. Basically, dumb, you know, and just, like, unimpressive.

They recognize this. It says, but they took note they had been with Jesus. Ordinary, unschooled, simple, unimportant. You're the light of the world.

What a privilege. The world you live in is in a constant state of brokenness, suffering, sin, shame, inundated by bad news. I mean, I cannot believe I'm still getting surprised, but I can't believe story after story after story, horror after horror after horror.

I mean, I just cannot believe how screwed up the world is, how broken the world is, how much pain and suffering there is all around us and not just out there in those bad, scary cities.

Friends, here, here, I mean, in our towns and our neighborhoods, here, people all worshipping everything else, money, power, sex, politics, pleasure, none of which are going to ever come close to addressing the chasm of brokenness with inside of us.

[24 : 56] And he says, you are the light of the world. You've got what they need. Listen to how Paul describes this beautiful privilege in Romans 10. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on him who they've not believed? How are they to believe in him who they've never heard? How are they to hear without someone preaching? How are they to preach unless they're sent as it is written? How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

Back to that analogy of a fire, you know, at your house in the middle of the night. I'm guessing, I'm just going to step out here on a limb. You know, you guys have probably got some little like rain machines or something like soothing sounds.

I bet a lot of you do like to go to sleep. I use that. You know, just this little green noise or whatever. Probably none of us have got fire truck as like a soothing sound to go to bed to. You know, that's what I need. That'll just lull me right to sleep blaring sirens, right? However, that not so beautiful sound surely sounds beautiful in the middle of the night when it's your house burning down and you hear that sound.

[26 : 02] If you've got a loved one who's in a medical emergency, the sound of that ambulance surely is a beautiful sound. And friends, when you bring the gospel, the goodness of Jesus, it is, Paul says, how beautiful are the feet.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news. Don't lose the privilege. Don't lose the privilege that people around you and me are suffering and you and I have the opportunity to step in and show them how good Jesus is.

How do we do it? There's been a lot of bad examples that have contributed to the confusion and I think even contributed to some of the like, is it morally wrong or right, you know? I have lived through a lot of different, you know, kind of evangelistic sort of iterations within Christianity in my short life on this earth.

I've, you know, seen the, there were these movies, these Jesus movies where we basically tried to like, it was like about the rapture happening and you were all gonna, like, you know, everyone left behind was gonna like, whatever, all these crazy things and we're like, our goal was just to terrify you and to follow Jesus so I've lived through that.

I've lived through the haunted hell houses, you know, around Halloween, you know, where we basically like get you in a room and we just scare you again. Like, scare is like a big tactic for us, like fear, right?

[27 : 23] So I've lived through the haunted hell houses. I've lived through the, what would Jesus do? Bracelets, which originated in my generation if they've, they've come back, they're back again but I'll tell you like, we were the ones that started it and I remember I had one, it was blue with white letters when it was first, you know, God burned it, like the edge so that it would like stay on my arm.

I was like, I'm gonna wear this for the rest of my life so Jesus comes back so that way people will know. This is how they're gonna know about Jesus because this blue little bracelet on my arm, right? That thing, I was a teenage boy, that thing got disgusting, like beyond measured, smelled horrible, letters, you know, unreadable, just terrible, you know, but man, that was gonna be it.

I've seen the seafood festival, the guys with the signs and the bullhorns screaming at everybody, you're going to hell. Mimes, I lived through that. There was a season, there was a little moment in time, 90s-ish, when we did Christian mimes, we thought that's gonna be it, that's the one that's gonna do it and you, you, some of you here are thinking, well, no one would do that, let me tell you, it was straight up competitive.

There were so many people at my church that wanted to do miming that there was multiple times I didn't make the mime team. That's how many people wanted to mime for Jesus, that, like, people didn't make the cut, right?

I remember, there was this other group of people would come around and they would tear phone books in half, you know, to like show people how good Jesus was. Some of you are like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we love those guys.

[29 : 01] Four spiritual laws and like coins we'd give people and tracts and all that kind of stuff, that was like a thing you'd do, you just go out in the street and you just like, just yell at people, man, just like, yeah, they're gonna, that's gonna make it work.

Church plays, all kinds of things, you know? I mean, I remember one time I was at a Taco Bell, some of you guys have heard this Taco Bell story. Years ago, I was at this Taco Bell and I got it and I'm like, man, I'm gonna preach the gospel and these people are all gonna get the gospel and I told my few friends who were just there for a nacho bel grande, like no one was there for what I was about to do and I said, hey, can you hold the table?

They were like, why? I was like, because I'm gonna stand on it. They were like, again, why? And I was like, because I'm gonna preach the gospel and they were like, oh my God, we should not have gone with this guy to dinner and so I get up on this table, I'm like wobbling, I can still feel myself and I started yelling.

I was like, you in the back making the tacos stop, you, everybody put your tacos down. I was just yelling, I'm like, Jesus, and I just gave everything I got and I mean, in my head, revival was gonna break out at this Taco Bell and y'all, surprise, not a single person.

I was like, if you wanna come to this table right now, nobody. Well, I'll be over here waiting for a while, nobody, like nobody. Anyway, I mean, we've seen it all, right? I mean, with respect to like the haunted hell houses and the, you know, street signs and the mimes and the tearing the phone books and all the things, some of these ideas are worse than others, you know.

[30 : 33] I'm not saying that because, you know, I guess what I'm trying to say is none of them are in the Bible. That doesn't make them inherently bad because we do lots of things that aren't in the Bible but it at least should make us kind of go, hey, what are the actual things in the Bible?

Like, how are we supposed to do this in the Bible? And if we want to add on some miming or something on the other side, I guess that's fine but it's like, at least let's do the things that are in the Bible. And so I want to show you just a few things quickly, like kind of, what does the Bible show us by way of how to do this?

And what I think is so, it's so incredible is that a lot of times what you see with this is it's got a lot, it's got less to do with like proving how right you are to others which is what sometimes these sort of things become and it's got more of showing people beauty and goodness.

And I think just a big idea is that goodness is powerfully evangelistic. Goodness, in a world of brokenness and sadness and evil, goodness is powerfully evangelistic.

In a world of selfishness and pride and all kinds of wickedness, goodness is powerfully evangelistic. three things that we see in Scripture.

[31 : 43] Firstly, do good deeds. You want to be evangelistic? Do good deeds. Matthew 5, 16, in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your big sign, hear your bullhorn.

No, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify, give glory to your Father who's in heaven. In Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit, we see this incredible list and then Paul says, against such things there is no law.

The golden rule has been widely accepted. You know who didn't come up with it? The Boy Scouts. He came up with it was Jesus. Luke 6, 31 where he said, do unto others as you'd have them do unto you. Do good deeds.

This is all over the place in the Bible but in James 1, we see the church told to look after widows and orphans in their distress. Do good deeds. Powerfully evangelistic.

This is the story throughout human history with the church. Really, Christianity broke out because of the way we serve the poor and the way we serve those who were suffering.

[32 : 48] In plagues, while everyone was fleeing for their lives, Christians were the ones who would stay or would go in and we would come alongside the sick and the diseased. We'd give people honor and dignity.

We'd bury them. We'd do whatever it took at risk to ourselves. And that spread the gospel powerfully. The way we cared for the weak and the marginalized.

The way we care for the grief-stricken, the addict, the captive, the abused. The way that we respond when people are victims of tragedy. Do good deeds.

Do good deeds. Secondly, live good lives. Live good lives. Do good deeds. Live good lives. 1 Peter 2, Peter says, beloved, beloved, I urge you, again, this is your sojourner, you're exiled, this world's not your home.

So abstain from the passions of your flesh. He's saying, live holy lives. And he says, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable. And another translation of that is, live such good lives among the Gentiles.

[33 : 49] The Gentiles are those who aren't followers of God, don't know Jesus. He said, live such good lives around them that they will glorify God. Live such a good life.

Friends, I just want to admit that it's easier to do good deeds than it is to live a good life. And I love that our church does all these good deeds. I love that we, you know, hurricane set, we're there.

Addiction, boom, we're there. I love all that. And so maybe, maybe we need to hear that again.

That's good. Do good deeds. But I think more than that, we need to hear, live good lives. Because people watch, they don't just watch what you like, what you do with like, how you serve the poor and all that.

I wish it was that simple. No, they see how you live your life. They're watching your conduct of your life. They see how you treat your family if you're married. They see how you, what you do after work.

They see what you post on social media. They see all that stuff. Let them see something different. Do good deeds. Live good lives. Lastly, share the good news that Jesus changed you.

[34 : 56] Share how the good news, share how the good news changed you. There's this quote, I forget who's attributed to you. I think Thomas Aquinas or something. He didn't say it. But it sounds really good.

It gets used a lot. It's this, preach the gospel always, use words when necessary kind of thing, right? Which sounds so nice. It's a false dichotomy, right? It's not, you know, one or the other, but also, it's unbiblical.

Like, we're told to open our mouth. Like, it's good that you open your home. It's good that you serve the poor. But you have to actually open your mouth. At some point, you actually have to open your mouth and tell people about Jesus.

The woman at the well in John 4 told her story. The demoniac in Mark 5 told his story. And I think through the years, Christians have gotten really good at not telling their story, at doing everything else.

So, we'll pass out tracts. You know, we'll leave them on toilets and stuff like that. That's not so much a thing anymore, but that was a big thing for a while. You know, it's impersonal.

[35 : 57] It's not connected to you. We'll tell other people's stories. We'll talk about, you know, all these methods that get away from the simplicity of what we see over and over in the Scripture where you just open your mouth and tell what Jesus did for you.

Tell your story of you receiving forgiveness and grace and mercy and what following Jesus has done for you. Now, culturally for us, it is getting tougher.

There was a time a few decades ago, even, you know, certainly more true before I was even born, where it was, you know, Christianity was more popular, more acceptable, and, yeah.

In our modern moment, secularism is, is hostile to the gospel. And so, we're living in an increasingly secular world, which means it's getting, getting more and more unpopular for us to open our mouth and talk about what Jesus has done.

It seems like we're tolerant of everything else but that. And as, I would say, as exclusive as that feels to us, like, oh man, we're really suffering. It's not.

[37 : 01] I promise you, it's certainly not exclusive to us. You know this, but you may not know this. This is happening all over the world in much more severe ways. A couple years back, myself and Brian Hart had the privilege of going and sitting with pastors and leaders of churches in Syria and Iran.

We were in northern Iraq, and they basically snuck these guys into the country. We were camping in this very remote place way up in the mountains just for safety, for their safety.

And we sat there around a fire for two days like weeping, just listening to story after story of them being thrown in jail and their friends being killed and hectic stuff. So, the suffering that we, the pushback we were having is certainly not exclusive to us and is certainly not as severe as most of the world.

But it can feel new, like all this feels so new, all this hostility towards the gospel and I went, friends, it is anything but new. Back at the very beginning of the church, there was persecution.

It broke out right away against the church. Hostility, you know. One story in Acts 4, they call Peter and John in. It says they charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

[38 : 12] They asked Peter and John to stop talking about Jesus. Don't do it anymore. It's not allowed. You're officially told not to do this. Peter and John answer them, whether it's right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.

For we cannot but speak of what we've seen and heard. In our moment, it's like, is it morally wrong to do this? It may get to the point where it's legally wrong to do this, but we cannot but speak of what we've seen and heard.

The hope of the world is Jesus and we cannot but speak of him. But let's do it with gentleness and respect. It's amazing to me that the same guy who's in Acts 4 standing up and saying that is the same guy who in 1 Peter 3 says, always be ready to give the hope, but do it with gentleness and respect.

He knew firsthand what it was like to be persecuted, to be beaten, etc. But Jesus was so good he couldn't keep his mouth shut. Let that be true for us. Amen? Amen? Hey, if you're here watching this and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, there's this great parable where Jesus describes himself

as a treasure.

He says he's like a man, he's like a treasure that a man found in a field and then the guy was like, oh my gosh, this is unbelievable and he went and sold everything he had and like skipped his whole way to the bank to sell everything he had so he could buy the field.

[39 : 42] And Jesus said, that's me. Jesus is better than anyone or anything in the whole world. He is the one worth leaving everything else to follow.

I was thinking yesterday of a lot of the disappointments in my life and I was just thinking, man, Jesus, you are the one who never disappoints. You never disappoint. He is the one worth leaving everything else to follow.

His first disciples did that. Countless others have done it. You see Jesus for who he is and you just go, wow, he's everything. I don't know what, I don't know what you know about Jesus yet but here's what I will tell you.

He's better. He's better than what you think you know about him and he just gets better and better the more you know him. Turn away from your sin. Turn away from living for yourself.

Turn away from trying to fix your life. Repent, that's what that word means. Turn away from it but believe, like turn to Jesus. Turn to him, see him, come to him, follow him, believe in him.

[40 : 46] If that's you this morning, we would love a chance to come alongside you, talk with you, pray with you. If this is like the first time you're going, okay, I'm going to really follow Jesus. We've got a prayer we'll put up on the screen that might help you as you kind of think through that but just come find us afterwards.

We'd love a chance to talk with you and pray with you. for the rest of us here or watching this and you're already a follower of Jesus. I really tried in this sermon to not make you feel guilty into evangelism.

I mean, that is a tactic, right? But it just doesn't last, you know, make you feel super guilty. Okay, I'll do it. I'll do it. I'll go clean my room, right? I want you to see the beauty of what Jesus has done.

But, you know, I was thinking about how to like land this and I think one of the best ways for all of us to see the beauty of Jesus is when it's compared to the ugliness of our own sin.

Like when you are made aware of your own sin, man, Jesus looks good. There's a guy named David in the Bible who did something horrific.

[41 : 49] He decided he wanted this woman and so he had her husband killed so that he could sleep with her and he's confronted in this most powerful way by this guy named Nathan who was a prophet and it was brutal.

But David's response is so helpful that I want us to kind of take our time as the band comes up, I want us to take our time kind of going through this passage together. I'm just going to read a couple verses and then I want you to take a moment after each of those, it's just three of them, take a moment and pray some version of that back to God.

So it starts off like this, Psalm 51 verse 2, David says, he's just been confronted with his sin. He says, have mercy on me, oh God. Have pity on me, that's what he's saying.

I don't deserve mercy, I don't deserve pity, but God have mercy on me. Why? According to your steadfast love. Not according to my perfect record and my Sunday school attendance and no, no, no.

According to your abundant mercy, God would you blot out my transgressions? Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. And he says this, he says, I know my transgressions.

[43 : 03] I know them. My sin is ever before me. I'm aware of it. I can see it. Against you, God. You only, I have sinned and done what's evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

He's saying, God, I'm not making any excuses for my sin. I'm not saying that, you know, well, what about the other guy? Or God, you're unfair. No, no, no. I can see my sin. I can see how bad it is.

So just start there. Just take a second and think of your own sin. Pray your own version of what David just prayed. and see you heard Thank you.

Thank you. Moving on in verse 7, David says, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

He said, I feel dirty. I'm stained. I'm guilty, but God, make me clean. Let me hear joy and gladness. You know, when you're really aware of your sin, you feel like just such an outcast.

[44 : 34] You feel just like so hopeless. And David prays, let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones you have broken rejoice.

He said, I'm broken, but God, let me rejoice. And then he asked this. He said, God, would you hide your face from my sins? You're the God who sees everything, who knows everything, who's perfectly holy and just.

God, is there a way for you to hide your face? How could God do that? Can you look away from my sins? Can you blot out all of my iniquities? Can you get rid of it? Can you make it go away, God? Is there a way to do that? Let's just take a moment and consider that it wasn't hyssop. It was the precious blood of Jesus. Scripture says that though our sins are like scarlet, we are made whiter than snow.

That there was a way, in fact, for God to look away from our sin. And that was by looking to Jesus. By Jesus taking on our sin, being covered with our sin, and we get made clean.

[45 : 42] Just take a second and consider the gospel that when you first heard it, and man, the joy and the gladness. Thank God that he's hidden his face from your sins, that he has blotted out all your iniquities.

Every single one of them that God has dealt with it in Jesus. Just take a moment, just thank God for the gospel. Amen. A lot of times that's where we want to end.

I did something bad. Jesus did something good. Amen. See you next week. But I love how David goes on in verse 12. And says, all right. God, would you restore to me the joy of your salvation? Uphold me with a willing spirit. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Remind me how good you are that you would save a wretch like me. And here's what I'll do. I will teach transgressors your ways.

And sinners will return to you. David said, I am going to do something about this. I'm going to do something with this. You, a God who would love me in spite of the horrors of my sin.

[47 : 03] God, I will do something about this. I will teach transgressors your ways. Sinners will return to you. He goes on and says, my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. And then he prays, oh Lord, just open my lips.

And my mouth will declare your praise. Francis, that is a good way for us to end this morning. Ask God to return the joy of your salvation. Tell God, I want to speak of your goodness.

I want to tell people of your goodness. Open my mouth, Lord. Give me opportunities. Everywhere I go, Lord, help me to speak of how good you are. Just take a second and pray your own version of that.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Friends, now we come to this meal.

Simple, simple meal, but profound. This meal of remembrance and grace. Let me pray for us.

[48 : 11] Jesus, we don't just come to you this meal. We come to you. It's not just this meal that's here. You're here. You're with us. Your very presence is with us, Jesus.

We come to celebrate you, what you've done for us. Come to celebrate that you're better, Jesus.

We come to celebrate that you're the treasure. You're the treasure.

And that we left everything and it was worth it. It was so worth it. That everything we'd ever have to give up is worth it. That Jesus, you are better than everything. Jesus, we come and we celebrate you when we take this meal.

We think of what you said. This was your body broken. This is your blood shed. Jesus, you were willing to do this for us. Jesus, you were willing to do this to purge us, to wash us, to cleanse us, to take care of our sin.

Jesus, we honor you. We celebrate you, what you've done for us, God. Your grace and your mercy to us. You've not left us in our sin. That you did not just give us good advice. Do better, try harder.

[49 : 10] Good luck. No, you gave us good news. You hung on that cross and your last words were, it is finished. So Jesus, we come this morning, we encounter afresh your grace and your mercy.

But Jesus, we just say, Lord, we don't want to keep this honey to ourself. We don't want to keep this goodness to ourself. God, would you help us? Empower us by your spirit.

Lead us by your spirit. Use us. Use our stories. As numerous as they are, God, every single one of us watching this, listening to this, our stories are so unique and so different in so many ways, but they're the same, every one of them.

We were lost, but now we're found. We were blind and now we see. We were hopeless and now we have hope. Jesus, use us to fill our towns and our neighborhoods and our schools and our workplaces with the good news of what you've done, Jesus.
In your name we pray. Amen. Friends, let's stand together. Let's take this meal together. There's tables around the room. If you're a follower of Jesus, this meal is for you. Make your way out.
[50 : 14] The front row will lead out and then we'll come back together. We'll sing one last song together. Let's do it.