
Outreach Ministries

1 Peter 2:11-3:17

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Tonight we are thinking together on Clearcreek Chapel's outreach ministries. This message is the third installment in the Biblical Ministries series aimed at making known our ministries at the Chapel. Pastor Russ' message on the great commission helped us to see that the commissional church focuses on both evangelism and edification. This morning Pastor Dale led us through 1 Thessalonians to teach on our discipleship ministries at the Chapel. By putting these two message together we might say that we are a church obeying King Jesus' command to make disciples; both near and far (to the neighborhoods and to the nations). This means that we aim to take the gospel to unbelievers and ask God to convert them to Christ. We then baptize converts and start the process of maturing them in their walk of faith. This process of making and maturing disciples occurs in community as we the church are on mission together.

Tonight I want to help us think carefully over the first half of this mission; outreach ministries.

Spreading the Gospel of God Ministries

The banner flying over all our outreach ministries is known as SGGM – spreading the gospel of God ministries. This sphere of ministry is organized into three parts. We can remember these ministries by the acronym A.C.T. (Activities. Communication. Training.)

Activities

Regarding activities, SGGM both organizes and/or assists activities centered on reaching unbelievers with the gospel. These activities are both ongoing and periodic and they come from leadership and each of you as the Lord leads and provides opportunities. These activities include praying for, planning over and participating in gospel ministries; ministries reaching our families and neighbors; our co-workers and students; planting the gospel in a nursing home or a jailhouse – wherever both unbelievers and we are we want to think together over ways the gospel can reach those without Christ.

Communication

Regarding communication, SGGM works on getting the gospel out. We provide quality literature free of charge to unbelievers. We also get good booklets and books to you to increase your love for and insight into the gospel. We are currently working on a blog site and are in the planning stage to make our lobby more attractive for literature distribution and gospel conversation. And so, preaching, teaching, writing, discussing and reading the gospel are valued at SGGM.

Training

Regarding training, SGGM sponsors elective classes to equip each of you with both getting the gospel right and valuing the gospel to the extent that you cannot keep quiet. You must spread the good news to the lost. We teach ways of saying the gospel. We lead live evangelism experiences to equip you in outreach ministry. We recently started a 3-year plan to teach each Flock about Becoming Commissional as a Flock so that each flock together loves the gospel more and loves those who do not know the gospel.

And so, with that as an overview of outreach ministries at the Chapel we now want to open our Bibles and visit a passage that teaches on outreach ministries.

Now, I chose this passage for a particular reason. Here at the Chapel we do have people gifted in evangelism. They are strong in their preaching the gospel. They are bold in proclaiming the good news of

Christ. They love to talk to unbelievers about their lost condition and how hope is found in the gospel. They seem to always get into gospel conversations wherever they go. And we at the Chapel want to see this more and more. We want the passionately gifted for evangelism to rise up, get more training, take more risks, to be filled with the Spirit and go into difficult places and light up the darkness with the gospel. Yes, we want to see a ground swell of evangelists at the Chapel. **But...**tonight's message is not about that.

Tonight's message is for the one we will call "Common Christian". I want to ask the question, "what about for the rest of us? What about those of us who are not gifted in evangelism? What are we to do? Are we to simply pray for the evangelists? Are we to help sponsor events featuring the gospel through this band of gospel preachers? Is there more for me "common Christian" to do in outreach ministries? How do we fit in to Clearcreek Chapel's local mission to the local lost"?

Tonight's message is our basic strategy of outreach here at the Chapel. It's our "bread and butter" outreach if you will. It will answer the question, "how do the rest of us talk about Jesus in the context of everyday life"?

Our passage for this evening is found in 1 Peter. In this letter we come across The Local Church's Local Mission through the eyes of the apostle Peter. And we find this strategy in 1Peter 3:13-17. Please open your Bibles to this passage; 1 Peter 3:13-17. Let's pray and then we will listen to this passage read. <pray>

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (ESV)

The Local Church's Local Mission (or, Common Christian Evangelism)

Our governing question for tonight addresses "common Christian". We will be guided through Peter's text by the question "How do the rest of us talk about Jesus"?

How do the rest of us talk about Jesus?

To begin answering this question, I want us to notice to whom this letter was written. You can see this as you flip back to the start of the letter. In 1:1-2 we notice who wrote the letter and to whom it was written.

The apostle Peter wrote this letter likely from Rome to churches Jewish in nature scattered throughout 5 Roman provinces in a vast area known today as Turkey. These Christians were living among pagans whose view of them was cautious and at times caustic. They were either probing the Christians with "who are you" kinds of questions or were persecuting them with insults and reviling (cf. 3:9,15,17).

These common Christians were led by biblically qualified elders (5:1-4), loved by God, gifted by the Holy Spirit (4:10) and now given Scripture in the form of this letter to highlight their hope for the future as a way of giving them hope for the present (1:3-9). They were instructed on how to show the unbelievers what it looks like to be God's people living together under God's rule (2:11-

12). And by showing them how simple people live well when life is not going well just might provide opportunities to talk simply about the gospel in hope that they too may be born again into this living hope (3:15; see also 1:23).

5 Pieces to Outreach Strategy

This beloved is the Apostle Peter's strategy for their and our outreach ministries. So let's see how this strategy works. We will take a look at 5 pieces to this strategy while asking the question: "How do we talk about Jesus to unbelievers"? Turn back to our paragraph for tonight; 3:13-17 and notice that our outreach ministries start:

By enthusiastically doing good even if it means suffering v13,14a,17

According to the first and last parts of this paragraph we see that they are to keep doing good deeds even if it leads to bad times.

Our passage starts with a question implying that suffering doesn't always come when we are living out our faith eagerly. But even if it should occur we will not stop being zealous over King Jesus.

By causing us to be born again (1:3) God has infused us with His life and has enthused us over His life. We now are eager to do good even if it means suffering for it. We are not to live our lives in a calculated way. We do not serve unbelievers only if we think it is safe or that they will be friendly or like us. NO. We serve in the zeal of the Lord indiscriminately. This may not lead to pain. But the possibility is there. When we are insulted or made fun of or dissed for doing good how are we sustained? How can we keep going in our strategy for outreach ministries?

By believing a sustaining promise when suffering v14b,17

As we read on in this paragraph we come to the second piece to our strategy for outreach ministries. How do we talk about Jesus to unbelievers? By believing a sustaining promise when suffering. Can you see that in the second part of v14 and v17? Listen again as I read:

V14 says, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake you will be blessed. Underline that promise in your Bibles! Listen to v17. "For it is better to suffer for good behavior if that should be God's will than for doing evil". Underline "it is better" in your Bibles. Do you want something better in your life? Are you tired of the humdrum, risk-free daily living caused by unbelief? Then repent from unbelieving this particular promise and eagerly go after some enhanced sense of His goodness and glory by doing good to some unbelievers knowing full well they may insult you (cf. 4:14). This is part of the strategy for outreach ministries.

1) by enthusiastically doing good even if it means suffering 2) by believing a sustaining promise when suffering we talk about Jesus to unbelievers.

By obeying the command "Don't be afraid of them" v14c

But if you are like me there is something that gets in the way of this ministry. It's like a restraining order place on the tongue. It's like a gag. It's like duct tape over the mouth. We see this in the latter part of v14.

Listen for it as I read the last part of v14. "Have no fear of them nor be troubled". Fear of unbelievers is a gospel speech impediment. We talk about Jesus to unbelievers by obeying the command "don't be afraid of them". Our outreach ministries increase to the degree we take God at His Word.

Tonight, as we carefully put together our outreach strategy from this passage we've seen that by enthusiastically doing good even if it means suffering and by believing a sustaining promise

when suffering and by obeying the command “don’t be afraid of them” we talk about Jesus to unbelievers.

By worshipping Christ the Lord as holy in our hearts

v15

So far so good but left just with this teaching we would woefully fall short of Peter’s teaching on outreach ministries. We would not have the essence of evangelism as the heart of our ministry. And that essence we find in v15.

Listen for it as I read the last part of v14 and v15 together. “Have no fear of them nor be troubled but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you”.

Here is the essence of evangelism. By worshipping Christ the LORD as holy in our hearts we talk about Jesus to unbelievers. I would love to take us back to Isaiah 8 as Peter does here to show the contrast Peter makes between fearing people and treating Christ holy. The idea in this passage and the point Peter makes is simple. We revere what we fear. What severs the root of fear of man in evangelism is to replace this fear with the fear of Christ. To hallow His name (cf. Matt.6:9), to be in awe of Him, to set Him apart as utterly unique and majestic, to treat Him as a treasure far surpassing earthly ones, to esteem Him as the highest and most important Person in the universe, to value Him above all – and do all this in our hearts – this is the essence of evangelism. Worshipping Christ in our hearts before we commend Christ to others will sever the fear of man and put the gospel on our lips. The essence of evangelism is to evangelize your own heart ongoingly. Take the gospel to your hearts before you take the gospel to the streets is the idea. And in doing so just may raise questions for you to answer as seen in v15-16.

By kindly answering questions raised by the good lives we live

v15-16

We’ve finally come to the place in the passage where we see people talking about Jesus to unbelievers. We could not get here too quickly though. If we would have started with this verse we would misread the text and our outreach ministries would not represent this passage nor Jesus Christ as they ought. Listen as I read v15-16.

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect having a good conscience so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame”.

The last piece to the puzzle regarding our strategy for outreach ministries is this:

By kindly answering questions raised by the good lives we live we talk about Jesus to unbelievers. See how simple that is? Oh, I’m not saying evangelism is easy. We’ve spent the last 40 minutes noticing how difficult it is. Evangelism is simple but not easy. The simplicity is noticed in these verses. People come to us as we live peculiar lives by grace. We are to be a provocative church. We are to be an intriguing people. We are fascinating to a watching world as we are:

1. enthusiastically doing good even if it means suffering
2. believing a sustaining promise when suffering
3. obeying the command “don’t be afraid of them”
4. worshipping Christ the Lord as holy in our hearts
5. kindly answering questions raised by the good lives we live

Now are we able to answer the initial question “how do we talk about Jesus to unbelievers”? Here we have our 5 pieces that make up the essence of our outreach ministries.

How are we to translate this message into meaningful outreach ministry in our neighborhoods (2:11-17), at work or school (2:18-25), at home (3:1-7)?

Let me wrap up our time together tonight with a series of questions that may assist us in application.

- Of the 5 pieces to outreach ministries presented tonight which piece is:
 - most confusing to you? Who will you go to for help to understand it?
 - most overwhelming to you? Who will you go to for strength to pursue it?
 - most missing in you? Who will you go to for confession, prayer & accountability?
- What piece was talked about as “the essence of evangelism”? Do you know how to rehearse the gospel in your heart daily? Do you know what it means to “hallow Christ the Lord as holy” in your heart? Who will you go to for help in both understanding and doing heart-felt worship of Christ?
- What personal and Flock activities can be put in place to help exercise each of the five parts to outreach ministries? What will progress for outreach ministry look like in your family and your Flock? What are some ways to celebrate small changes and accomplishments?
- Where will you start to apply your “eager good deeds” to unbelievers even if it leads to suffering? Who will you share your stories with as you make these changes? How will believing promises and obeying commands increase your ministries?
- How is talking about Jesus to unbelievers simple but not easy? Who will you go to should you get questions you can’t answer?

Let’s take a listen to how the apostle Peter closed his letter in a way that will close our time in hearing His Word.

By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it...peace to all of you who are in Christ”.
[5:12,14b].