

RADIATING THE GOOD NEWS: MESSAGING THE GOSPEL & NEIGHBORING THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION: RADIATING THE GOSPEL

As we have seen, all communication involves a sender, a receiver, and a message. Because evangelism is a form of communication, we have discussed:

- The content of the message (i.e., the gospel)
- The ethics of persuasion (i.e., appropriate and inappropriate methods of evangelism)

We have also begun our discussion of what it means to be “winsome” for the gospel. We now want to go a step further, exploring what it might look like to be an ethical, winsome, *and effective* witness for Christ at this particular time in history. Specifically:

- How are we to regard and interact with unbelievers?
- How can we effectively “radiate the gospel” to them?

While the work of saving people falls on the shoulders of God, the work of being a witness falls on the shoulders of Spirit-empowered believers. Both Jesus and Paul speak to the issue of our *message* having credibility when we as *messengers* have credibility.

A. Radiate the gospel by doing good deeds. (Matt 5:14-16)

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1. What does it mean to be the light of the world?
2. How does one shine this light? What are the consequences of hiding it?
3. What are some good deeds for which others might be inclined to praise God?

B. Radiate the gospel by displaying good character. (Phil 2:14-16a)

¹⁴Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶as you hold out the word of life.

1. How does Paul describe his generation, and the Christian alternative to it?
2. What are some practices listed here that can “lower the wattage” of shining stars?
3. What does it mean to hold out the word of life?

COULD YOU BELIEVE?

Words & Music by Twila Paris

He was a friend to sinners
He was a gentle man
Beautiful, humble master plan
His voice could pierce the darkness
Quiet an angry sea
I hear Him saying follow me
I look in your eyes and I tell you these things
But somehow I know that it's hard to believe

Could you believe if I really was like Him
If I lived all the words that I said
If for a change I would kneel down before you
And serve you instead
Could you believe?

He was the Lamb of mercy
Undying hope of men
Waiting for love to come again
He is the light of heaven
Radiant Prince of peace
I hear him saying, "Follow Me"
I look in your eyes and I tell you these things
But somehow I know that it's hard to believe

Could you believe if I carried my own cross
If I saw that the children were fed
If for a moment I held my opinion
And quietly led
Could you believe?

I am meant to be a pure reflection of the truth
So above it all I pray that I will not obscure the view

Could you believe if I stood here transparent
And through me you could see his eyes
Could you believe if you saw right inside me
And there was no disguise

Could you believe if I was really like him
If I lived all the words that I said
If it was clear that I held in my heart
What I know in my head
Could you believe, could you believe

Looking at me, could you believe
Could you believe?

JESUS, FRIEND OF SINNERS

Words & Music by Matthew West and John Mark Hall

Jesus, friend of sinners, we have strayed so far away
We cut down people in your name, but the sword was never ours to swing
Jesus, friend of sinners, the truth's become so hard to see
The world is on their way to You but they're tripping over me
Always looking around but never looking up I'm so double minded
A plank-eyed saint with dirty hands and a heart divided

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners
Open our eyes to the world at the end of our pointing fingers
Let our hearts be led by mercy
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks yours

Jesus, friend of sinners, the one who's writing in the sand
Made the righteous turn away and the stones fall from their hands
Help us to remember we are all the least of these
Let the memory of Your mercy bring Your people to their knees
Nobody knows what we're for only what we're against when we judge the wounded
What if we put down our signs crossed over the lines and loved like You did

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners
Open our eyes to world at the end of our pointing fingers
Let our hearts be led by mercy
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks yours

You love every lost cause; you reach for the outcast
For the leper and the lame; they're the reason that You came
Lord I was that lost cause and I was the outcast
But you died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at Your feet

'Cause You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners
Open our eyes to world at the end of our pointing fingers
Let our hearts be led by mercy
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks Yours

And I was the lost cause and I was the outcast
You died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at Your feet

I. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR? (LUKE 10:25-37)

A. Gospel Messaging

1. The gospel is an announcement that a new emperor has taken the throne. (Luke 2:8-14; Phil 2:9-11)
2. The gospel is an announcement about what God has freely done, is doing, and will do for us in Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:1-10a)

B. Gospel Neighboring

1. Messaging the gospel without neighboring the gospel undercuts the credibility of the gospel. (Jas 2:14-17)
2. Jesus says that next to loving God, loving our neighbor is the greatest thing we can do. (Matt 22:34-40)
3. Gospel neighboring means serving those around us, whether they believe the gospel or not. (Matt 5:43-47)
4. Jesus does not let us get away with finding loopholes in the command to love our neighbor. (Luke 10:25-37)
5. Where people live right now is part of God's strategic plan to lead them to himself. (Acts 17:24-28)

1. Write the names of the people who live in the houses around you as represented by the boxes. If you can give both first and last names, that's great. If it's only first names, that's fine too.
2. Write down some relevant information about each person in that house--not facts you could observe by standing in the driveway ("Drives a red car") but facts that you've gathered from actually speaking to them ("Works for a bank"; "plays golf"; "is a really disheartened Eagle's fan").
3. Write down any in-depth information you know about each of the residents. This could include details like their career plans, their medical challenges, or religious beliefs—the kind of information that comes from real conversation.



- **Key Point:** *Gospel neighboring starts with getting to know the people who providentially surround us.*

II. HONORING EVERYONE (1 PETER 2:9-17)

A. What does it mean to HONOR everyone?

1. Honor others by treating them with value, significance, dignity, importance, or respect.
2. Honor others even if they don't honor you in return.
3. Honor others by going beyond merely tolerating them.
4. Honor others even while disapproving of their values, beliefs, or lifestyle choices.
5. Honor others by disagreeing with them "with gentleness and respect."

B. What does it mean to honor EVERYONE?

1. Everyone should be honored—the good, the bad, the ugly, and the vile.
2. Everyone should be honored—the widows, the orphans, the immigrants, the disabled, the poor, the disadvantaged, the unborn, the marginalized, etc.
3. Everyone should be honored who has been created by God and is loved by God.
4. Everyone should be honored because we can make a distinction between people and their deeds.
5. Everyone should be honored for their personhood, but respect for their deeds must be earned.
6. Everyone should be honored because we can "unstick" a person's bad deeds from their personhood.

7. Everyone should be honored because the miracle of “unsticking” is possible by the grace of God.

► **Key Point:** *The followers of Christ are given a shocking (and world changing) command—to honor everyone.*

III. THE MAN AT THE WELL (JOHN 4:1-42)

A. Practice gospel NEIGHBORING.

1. Build some margin into your schedule to practice gospel neighboring.
 - a. You may need to become more selfless to do this.
 - b. You may need to make certain sacrifices to do this.
2. Overcome the classic barriers that prevent gospel neighboring.
 - a. Overcome the racial barrier.
 - b. Overcome the gender barrier.
 - c. Overcome the moral barrier.
 - d. Overcome the fear-of-rejection barrier.
3. Engage in respectful dialogue while gospel neighboring.
 - a. Find a way to tap into the real questions and deep concerns of the other person.
 - b. Find a way to genuinely honor, bless, serve, and be responsive to the other person.

- c. Find a way to turn the conversation to spiritual things for the benefit of the other person.

B. Practice gospel MESSAGING.

1. Emphasize the greatness of who Jesus is.
 - a. Jesus is much more than a mere man.
 - b. Jesus is much more than a mere prophet.
 - c. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.
2. Emphasize the graciousness of what Jesus offers.
 - a. The living water of salvation is God's gift, freely given to the underserving who believe.
 - b. The living water of salvation is God's gift, purchased by the One who thirsted on the cross.

► **Key Point:** *Gospel neighboring and gospel messaging is a solid path to gospel embracing.*

IV. CROSSING BORDERS (MARK 7:24-37)

A. Cross the CULTURAL borders to interact with broken outsiders. (7:24-30)

1. A Gentile woman makes a surprising and desperate request of Jesus, a Jewish rabbi.
2. Jesus is giving this woman—and his disciples—a critical test (cf. Matt 15:21-28).
3. Only the hardest of hearts would be unmoved by this woman's plight.
4. Jesus creatively exposes his disciples' prejudices against women and Gentiles.

5. Jesus expertly pulls out of the woman the virtues of humility, faith, and perseverance.
 - a. Humility: “I accept that I don’t have a place at the table; I *am* unclean.”
 - b. Faith: “I am not coming to you on the basis of my own goodness but yours; you *are* generous.”
 - c. Perseverance: “I love my daughter deeply, and I will not let you go until you bless me!”
6. Sometimes the outsiders know better than the insiders how wide God’s mercy really is.
7. The woman’s daughter is healed without any words or actions by Jesus.
8. Jesus is portrayed here as a new Elijah, serving a Gentile woman in Tyre who has a needy child.

B. Cross the COMMUNICATION borders to interact with broken outsiders. (7:31-37)

1. A deaf man with a speech impediment is brought to Jesus by local men.
2. Communication with such a man likely would be difficult, laborious, and frustrating.
3. Jesus preserves the man’s dignity by taking him away from the crowd for personal, private interaction.
4. Jesus displays great sensitivity in speaking a form of sign language so the man knows what’s happening.
5. The “sigh” of Jesus indicates that he is personally invested in the healing and wholeness of this man.
6. The man is healed with a word and multiple actions by Jesus.

7. Jesus is portrayed here as the fulfillment of the messianic anticipation as described in Isaiah 35:4b-6a.

C. Some Insights about Jesus—the One We Seek to Follow

1. Jesus demonstrates that the grace of God cannot be contained within the borders of men.
2. Jesus wants to heal and cleanse all kinds of people so that they are whole and fit to be in God's presence.
3. Jesus must *expose* prejudice before he can *redeem* it; his border crossings give his followers a larger vision.
4. Jesus is genuinely concerned about—and displays great sensitivity toward—those who need his touch.
5. Jesus interacts with people according to their particular needs—sometimes bluntly, sometimes gently.
6. Jesus is understood better—and experienced more deeply—in community because of this particularity.
7. Jesus does not disconnect from people in need; he touches them and genuinely “sighs” for them.
8. Jesus is God who has come to save us, not by *giving* divine retribution but *absorbing* divine retribution.
9. Jesus knows that for a dog to become a son at the table, the Son at the table must become a dog.

► **Key Point:** *Jesus crossed all kinds of borders with his grace, and he wants his followers to do the same.*