



A Place for You- Go, Part 2
1 Thessalonians 2; Romans 10; Colossians 4:2-6
9-2-18

Main Point

Making Jesus known requires urgency.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Last week when we met, we discussed how we witness because there is no plan B. We are plan A and we have been given freedom to share the gospel and are to take advantage of the opportunity as much as possible. For this discussion, we are going to focus on how we are to have urgency in sharing the gospel and focus on how it affects our individual lives.

What is the one regularly occurring task that you always put off instead of doing immediately? What is it about that task that makes you procrastinate?

In general, what are some reasons people might give for putting things off until tomorrow?

In what sense is procrastination a spiritual issue? How does procrastination affect our relationship with God? How might it affect our relationship with others?

We often put off the most important things because we assume we will have another chance. We think tomorrow will be another opportunity to get our hearts right, mend a relationship, make an important decision, or get rid of a sinful habit. The reality, however, is that no one but the Lord knows what tomorrow will bring (James 4:14). Knowing this ought to give us a sense of urgency as disciples of Christ, particularly with regard to evangelism. As followers of Christ, we must strive to be mindful of the limited time we have on earth so that we can urge our friends to trust Christ while there is still time.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

I. Urgency begins with the right motives.

| Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Here is a classic understanding of biblical love. To Paul, love is always a verb, it is doing. Feelings may accompany love, but they do not define it. Instead, the commitment of acting in the best interest of another opens the way for feelings: **We loved you so much that we were delighted to share ... our lives.**

Did you ever have show and tell as a child? You brought in a special item to school and not only showed your classmates why it was special but you told them about it. The same is true in our motives for sharing the gospel. For example, Pastor Brady makes the statement how the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) sets up the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This truth was evident in how Jesus encountered Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus realized how awesome salvation was and he desired to not only show about it but to tell others as well.

How can we know that Zacchaeus' motives were pure? Unique? Powerful?

In what ways does Zacchaeus' actions motivate you to share the gospel?

What are ways that you can demonstrate that you value your relationship with Christ as something special to not only show but tell others?

Transition: Not only are we to have the right motives but how we view others and the call we have to share the gospel impacts our urgency.

II. Urgency continues with the right perspective.

Have a volunteer read Romans 10:1-4, 9-10, 13

Pastor Brady states how there are many people that know God, but they just don't know how to get to Him. Christ made it possible for **everyone who believes** to attain a righteous standing before God. As the **end (telos) of the law**. Christ was its fulfillment (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4), not its chronological termination (Rom. 6:15). However, it was his fulfillment of the law's requirements, and his resulting confirmation in righteousness, that cast the law aside as a tormentor of all who bore the guilt of not keeping it.¹

For example, in the story of Cornelius in Acts 10, by all accounts we would look at his acts on the outside as being a good person that we would think God would allow into heaven because of His works. However, the reality is that God sent Peter to share the gospel with Cornelius and to reveal the work of the resurrected Christ to show Cornelius how truly salvation comes from no other way and by no other name (John 14:6, Philippians 2:10-11).

Merely confessing **Jesus is Lord** is not the whole gospel. In fact, it is the outward, public manifestation of a heart-held belief. Thus, comes the affirmation and belief that Christ had indeed been resurrected from the dead. The resurrection was an essential part of apostolic preaching in the early days of the gospel ministry (Acts 2:31-32; 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 17:32) and became a central part of Paul's teaching to the churches. Indeed, if there is no resurrection, there is no Christianity.²

¹ Boa, K., & Kruidenier, W. (2000). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 309). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Ibid, 311.

As we share Christ in our lives, we must remember that God desires to use us as His vessels to share His truth. Therefore, we must have the right perspective of how we love, pray, care, and share the truth of the gospel.

Why is our confession to be matched with our belief in the work of Jesus? How does this become a struggle for us in our daily lives for these to match?

What are ways that your perspective in sharing the gospel can become skewed? What are ways that we can help to make sure we have a clear vision of why we are to share the gospel?

Transition: Our urgency involves having the right perspective in why we share. Our urgency as well is not to be just a phase of life but it is a call for our entire lives to be devoted to sharing Christ.

III. Urgency demonstrates the right devotion.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 4:18-19

Pastor Brady makes four key points in this part for us to remember:

1. Be willing to drop your nets. This statement means that we must be willing to trade the temporal for the eternal. What are some nets that we must be willing to put aside to share the gospel? Are you living for the almighty dollar or for the Almighty? What is the Lord calling you to put aside to make an eternal investment in someone else?
2. Live for the ask: Read 1 Peter 3:15. The starting point to being prepared to give an answer is to honor Christ as Lord. How does honoring the Lord provide clarity in your devotion to Him?
3. Invest and invite. Who are you specifically investing in to share the gospel with? How are you investing your time, talents, and offerings to further the gospel?
4. Realize the power of your story. Ask for a volunteer to share their salvation testimony to the group.

Which one of these areas do you feel is an area of struggle? How does it impact how you are devoted to Christ?

Why must we be devoted in telling others about Jesus?

When have you seen evangelism go wrong in our culture because the church didn't have the right devotion?

Transition: As we finish up the study, there is one more part of urgency that involves our understanding of the love of Jesus.

IV. Urgency calls for the right discernment.

| Have a volunteer read Colossians 4:5-6

Believers in Colossae would encounter people of various types whose responses and questions would differ. Christians were to be prepared to fit their words to each person who asked about Christ and various elements of the gospel. Because we belong to Christ, we are to exercise wisdom in how we behave. We must

know what Christ expects of us, and our conduct must reflect our determination to live according to His standards. A Christian lifestyle offers a strong witness in our “anything goes” culture.

As we seek to share the gospel with those around us, it is critical that we treat them as people rather than projects. While the gospel never changes, we must acknowledge that the way we present it will vary from person to person. Paul’s words about a believer’s speech echo Jesus’ description of disciples as “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). In the context of personal relationships, it implies that our speech should be compelling, interesting, and winsome. We must recognize that people are diverse and consequently our approach in communicating the gospel to people must also be diverse.

**What does it mean to conduct yourselves with wisdom toward those who are not followers of Jesus?
In what specific ways can you grow in your humility and integrity as you relate to “outsiders”?
What is the best way to keep ourselves sharp, alert, and ready to share our faith?**

The more we try to make “the most of every opportunity” we have, the more we’ll be trained and ready for opportunities to address others’ spiritual needs and questions. Paul’s evangelistic training regimen included constantly thinking about how we relate to the people around us. In doing so, we’re looking for any opportunity to share our faith intelligibly, having lived with humility and integrity. As a church, we will make Jesus known when the love of Christ so fully engulfs our hearts that sharing the gospel and loving others as Christ loved us become the natural expressions of our relationship with God.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What specific things are keeping you from seeking the kingdom first this week? Practically, how can you fight those distractions?
What are some practical ways you might redeem your time in order to pursue Christ this week?
Share some practical and natural ways we might begin conversations with nonbelievers that could lead to sharing the gospel.**

Pray

Pray and thank God for the moments you have been given up to this point. Commit yourself again to making the most of the opportunities that will come your way. Ask for the wisdom necessary to speak the gospel clearly, wisely, and winsomely to the people around you so that Jesus Christ might be known!

Commentary

1 Thessalonians 2:8

It is easier to teach theology than to love, easier to share lists than time. Paul gave not only the message of the gospel, but the example of it as well. He spent time. He shared joys and headaches. Parents and teachers, coaches and mentors, pastors and leaders know what it means to give part of their heart away to others. Love is not just a job. It is a way of life.

But note that Paul did *share* the gospel of God. He was balanced. He gave his life and love. He gave content as well. It is not enough to visit people in the hospital or prison, or to show compassion to the poor or those new in the faith. Somewhere, carefully and candidly, they must also hear the truth of the cross and what it means to trust and follow Christ.

Arguing whether the church should meet people's physical needs or whether it should limit itself to preaching the gospel is like debating which wing of an airplane is more important. Both are essential!³

Romans 10:1-4

Paul's constant ministry for the saved, as well as the unsaved, was a ministry of **prayer** (Rom. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:7; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:16–17; Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:3, 9–10; 1 Thess. 1:2–3; 2 Thess. 1:3, 11–12; 2 Tim. 1:3; Phlm. 1:4, 6). Likewise, he tried to inculcate his readers with the importance and urgency of **prayer** for all types of needs (Rom. 15:30–31; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18–20; Col. 4:3–4; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25; 2 Thess. 3:1–2; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5).⁴

Without a doubt, Paul's prayer for Israel was that what had been taken away from them—spiritual discernment and **knowledge** (see Isa. 6:9–10)—would be restored to them. He knew they were not carefully rejecting the claims of Christ, as if they knew something that he did not. They were stumbling over Christ because of spiritual blindness. It was as if they were walking down a path on a moonless night and stepped on the tail of the Lion of Judah who was lying in their way. They never even knew what hit them. Thus is the nature of spiritual blindness.⁵

The law, instead of providing a way to arrive at a right standing with God, comes to an end in Christ. Paul wrote, "Christ is the end of the law" (v. 4). The law is brought to an end so that righteousness may be within the reach of all who believe. As Paul said elsewhere, the purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith (Gal 3:24). Phillips translates, "For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him." As the hymnwriter A. M. Toplady put it, "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to thy cross I cling." The only thing God requires of people is that they not persist in trying to earn what they can only receive as a totally free gift. Their problem is that pride stands in the way of receiving God's gift. Deeply ingrained in people's hostility to divine grace is a proud and stubborn self-reliance that would rather suffer loss than be deprived of an occasion for boasting.⁶

Romans 10: 9-10

³ Larson, K. (2000). *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Vol. 9, p. 24). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁴ Boa, K., & Kruidenier, W. (2000). *Romans* (Vol. 6, p. 308). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, pp. 207–208). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Those who come to Christ by faith are acknowledging that they have placed themselves entirely and without reserve under his authority to carry out without hesitation whatever he may choose for them to do. There is no such thing as salvation apart from lordship. Although our level of obedience may falter from time to time, that does not imply that we can view our responsibilities as if they did not matter. Those who say that they intend to have a good time on earth and take a back seat in heaven do not realize that there are no “back seats” for those who approach salvation with this attitude.

Outward confession stems from a profound inward conviction. Those who come to Christ must believe in their hearts that Jesus was raised from the dead by God the Father. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very center of the Christian faith. Apart from the resurrection Christianity would be little more than a well-intentioned ethical system. It is a fact that within history God did something that defies all the laws of nature as we know them. He raised Jesus from the dead. It is the reality of this resurrection that lends credence to all that Jesus did and taught throughout his earthly life. It is God’s way of authenticating to us that Jesus is the Son of God (cf. 1:4). The truth of the resurrection was at the very center of the apostolic preaching.⁷

Romans 10:13

Turning to the prophet Joel, Paul reminded his readers that salvation is for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Joel 2:32). Nowhere in Scripture is the universal scope of salvation presented with greater clarity. Although God’s redemptive plan was worked out in history through one particular race, it was meant from the beginning for the benefit of all people everywhere.⁸

Colossians 4:2-6

Paul ended his epistle as he opened it, urging his readers to prayer. The structure of these verses resembles the opening prayers of the epistles. The only direct statement in these verses is, “Devote yourselves to prayer.” The command to pray concerned general watchfulness and Paul’s ministry. Paul hoped for an open door to be faithful to his calling and for clarity in communicating the message. In other epistles, Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) or its equivalent. The same general tone occurs here. The specific word translated “devote yourselves” means “to persist in.” Though the word is different, the meaning is the same. Prayer was to characterize the Colossian church.

Paul requested that they pray for an open door for the gospel (4:3). Paul always sought ways to communicate the gospel. In these verses, Paul disclosed the reason for his success in witness as well as the reason he hoped to speak. His success was because he looked to the Lord to supply the wisdom for the opportunity. They were to pray that he would find an open door. The apostle lived for such opportunities that were often the redeeming virtues of his circumstances. He knew, however, that God provided these doors of ministry.

Paul asked for ability to walk through such doors as would open. Consistently in Colossians, the term “manifest” refers to revealing what is hidden (3:4). Paul looked for new situations in which he could make the gospel known. On the one hand, Paul did not pray specifically for a “preaching point,” as though that were the only

⁷ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, pp. 209–210). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁸ *Ibid*, 211.

approved means of spreading the gospel. On the other hand, v. 3 makes clear that Paul thought it imperative to speak the word. He hoped, therefore, for an oral ministry. He hoped further that he would do justice to the nature of the gospel so that the witness would be clear.

Having discussed a door of opportunity in ministry, Paul turned his thoughts to wise conduct. The verb used, which is translated “be wise in the way you act,” occurs frequently to identify proper conduct. Generally, translators use some form of the word “walk.” Wisdom provides a proper environment for the Christian’s walk. The theme of wisdom occurs frequently in this epistle, and that probably reflects a major concern of the false teachers as well. Literally, Paul said, “In wisdom be walking.” Thus godly wisdom encompasses the life, as well as the words. At the beginning of the epistle, Paul prayed for the Colossians to know wisdom; here he prayed for them to live it. The phrase “making the most” comes from a verb meaning “to buy up,” as if finding a bargain. Here it conveys the idea of making the most of one’s time spent with unbelievers.

Wisdom was necessary because of their Christian testimony. The “ones outside” needed examples of God’s wisdom. Paul’s concern was the non-Christians’ response to the gospel and the attitude of Christians toward them. Divine wisdom results in a positive witness.