

Sharing Our Faith
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Last weekend I was not here because I was at the University of Michigan with Tim visiting Jonathan for parents weekend. We did all the normal fun stuff parents do at parent weekend events.

We had a little brunch, went to a little speech and got to see U Mich football game which was great. We bought him groceries as parents will do, I decorated his room and bought him a scented candle deodorizer BB&B which he desperately needed.

We also hung around Jon's baseball facility and we were in the locker room, which is a rather nice place with couches and blue carpet. I don't why we were in there – probably waiting for Jonathan to find a sock – but all of a sudden people in black suits walk in. We were one of only a few other people in the locker room with them.

They were very business like. When we asked if we could help they said “no”. They kept saying things like – *well we could barricade this area, and bring him through here – and we could have him get ready to speak in this area – and bring him out through the batting cages and use the work out room as a safe house.*

Well finally Jon asked this group of dark suited people who they were, and without flinching or meeting his eye they said, “Oh...we are the United States Secret Service”. Jon starts to laugh...we all start to laugh...until they show us their badges.

So the next question is of course “Why are you here in a baseball locker room?” which someone did ask, at which point they said “We can't tell you.”

Alright. So we start to guess. Is it, Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, Pence or Kane...we knew it was a “he” (the next was the day before the election) The secret service were rather amused by our enthusiasm. We wanted to know so badly. For awhile they kept saying to all of our guesses “we can neither confirm or deny”. But we kept at it.

Finally one secret service guy starts talking to us, telling us that he never wanted to be in politics but one thing led to another and here he was. And we listen empathically, and nod understandingly and he hands us front row tickets to see Obama, who was indeed coming to speak on the baseball field – Ray Fischer Stadium - the next day.

The first time a president has ever spoken at a University Baseball Field – just happened to be the day that we were in the locker room at Ray Fischer Stadium. That's called being in the right place at the right time.

We got to shake hands with Obama and he even signed Jon's baseball. I will never forget that experience.

It was a very exciting day for us, but despite all the pomp and security and incredible energy on the field that day...as I shook Obama's hand something got to me that I hadn't really fully experienced before and it was this simple fact.

That all of the candidates on our ballots, and even the president himself are just people. Flawed. Mortal. Humans...Trying the best they can, but still woefully human.

And then I thought about the scripture that says...

“our citizenship is in heaven...” (Philippians 3:20)

Friends, we are of a different kind..belonging to a different place...when we know Christ
And then I thought about how
nations come and go; kingdoms rise and fall, circumstances ebb and flow.

And on Tuesday past we just voted on a bunch of offices and propositions, and how each of us feel about every outcome will vary widely.

But as Christians our ultimate identity and security come not from who we voted for, or whether that person won or lost...

Our identity and security and way of life comes from another Ruler, to whom we give our ultimate allegiance.

That's the one *we follow*. Not a human being, but eternal God of Jesus Christ, who holds the beginning and the end in his hands...

And the command of Christ is that we follow him, and that we share his living reality with others.

Lining up behind Trump or Clinton is not what it is about for the Christian.

In fact I heard so many people saying this election that they were voting for the lesser of two evils. That's too bad.

But the truth is for us...we follow the best leader ever.

Not the lesser of two evils, but Wonderful Savior, Eternal God, friend of sinners, Lord of Lords, who sees the nations (the psalms tell us) as a drop in the bucket.

Who holds time in his hands, and who has promised to be faithful to lead us in all things no matter who is elected president. Who tells us that he is sovereign...over all the events of history

Scripture says...

We live as 'resident aliens' in this life; knowing that our full experience of belonging – our citizenship - lies in a future beyond human accomplishment.

That's not a cop out though for this world because... while we are here, aliens all of us, *we are called to make a difference in human lives by sharing who Jesus is with others and pointing them to that other kingdom where God reigns... and also championing the causes that matter most, not to the democratic or the republic party — but to the Lord.*

So **The first way we share our faith is by how we live.**

We live in this world championing the causes of Christ which are justice and mercy;

compassion and humility;

wisdom and understanding for the deep needs in our broken dark world.

And being the hands and feet of Christ for the person with no voice, the least of these, the poor, the homeless, the outcast.

Sometimes the human government will support us as we seek to do the things that do indeed proclaim a God of justice and mercy.

Sometimes however, human government will not support the things of Christ and that is when we need to have courage, and stamina to stand up for what we know is right as Christians.

You know, **nothing else matters more than sharing Christ with others in this world. That's why we are here** folks.

As CS Lewis once..., **“The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important.”** If Jesus is Lord of Lords, if Jesus saved you from all your sins and if God's word is true, sharing that truth deserves everything we've got.

It's not like the Lord is a piece of the pie along with career and hobbies. He's the whole pie.

If this is not true friends, and Jesus has not captured your heart and made you a passionate follower... if we aren't willing to give Jesus our all and share him the world even when challenges come...then let's close up shop and go home. **The casual Christian is a contradiction in terms.** You're either passionate about sharing God with a broken world with all your heart and soul and mind and strength or you're not.

Sharing the Lord with others is why we are here.

That's the point. **There is no other purpose for the Christian than to share what we know of this glorious God with others and we don't have much time.**

So as we line up behind not a political party, but behind the God of the universe, who holds leaders and nations in his hands, let's take stock again of how important it is to share Jesus Christ...

Sharing our faith by living differently is essential.

But **The second way we share our faith is by telling people about Jesus – using words.** This is not something all of us like to do.

I heard a woman tell me that no one had ever shared the gospel with her in words and she was confused. All she knew was that Christians did nice things for others. Her problem was though, that she thought her salvation was based on works. Because she just saw Christians running around and doing good stuff...No one had explained the grace of Jesus to her - So I did!

Let's do a mass confession. How many of you find it difficult... to verbally share your faith with others?

Okay. Thanks for being honest.

So just for a few minutes, we are going to look at Phillip and see how he did it.

So the first thing we learn from Philip is that he had the faith to follow even when he wasn't sure what God was doing. He didn't know why God wanted him on that desert road, but he went anyway.

Notice...this was Holy Spirit initiated. Not Phillip initiated. And sometimes we find that when we meet someone on a desert road – in a time of need, or trial, or circumstantial stress – that's when the Holy Spirit tugs at our heart and says NOW....and we need to respond

But it isn't a NOW that means necessarily hand them a tract, or tell them what to do to fix their problem – give them lecture on God...It's a "go alongside the chariot"...it's a meet the man on his journey NOW

What I find most important about this passage, and what I think that we as a church really need to hear, is the part where it says: **"he invited Philip to come and sit with him."**

This man wasn't saved because one day, he decided his life wasn't just right, so he went to church.

He wasn't saved because he stumbled across a TV preacher one night when he couldn't sleep.

He wasn't saved because he found a Gospel tract in a public restroom.

He was saved because Philip took seriously Jesus' command to go to the world.

He was saved because Philip was willing to go and sit with him.

Philip didn't wait for him to go visit a church some Sunday morning.

Philip went and sat with him where he was.

Philip didn't figure someone else would talk to him.

Philip took the opportunity to talk to him.

And Philip didn't drop a pamphlet,

Philip took the time to be in relationship.

I think the church that wants to grow needs to hear this, and understand it. I think the church that wants to be serious about not just being disciples but making disciples needs to understand this.

Because no matter how friendly our people, no matter how warm our fellowship, no matter how inspiring our worship or how talented our choir, the vast majority of the people in this town who need a church will never know any of that.

You know what folks need? They *need someone like Philip.*

They need someone to come and *sit with them.*

They need someone to *meet them* where they are, and, like Philip did, tell them the good news of Jesus.

You know, we tend to think...***That is so hard.*** *Í can't tell people about Jesus, I'm not a preacher."*

Well, can you do this: **Can you sit with someone?**

Can you listen to their problems and **tell them how God helps you** through yours?

Can you say, hey, I don't have all the answers, but you know, when I go to church, I have some friends there, and we love each other, and pray for each other, and talk with each other, and with God's help, we figure things out.

Can you be like Philip, and meet people where they are?

Who do you know that needs someone to sit with them? Who needs someone to talk with them? Someone to invite them?

Cause this is the agenda of the God whom we follow. This is his party line.

Going to all the world is not as difficult as it may sound. For Philip, all it meant was sitting next to a stranger.

Being a part of making disciples does not mean that you have to preach or pass out Bible tracts or knock on every door.

It means that you love your neighbor.

It means that you love them so much that you cannot bear to see them live and die without knowing and having what you know and have in Christ

It means your heart is open to the needs of people around you.

It means your mind is open so that you see people as people and not as stereotypes.

We *can't expect* all who need the Lord to wander through the doors and into our pews.

It is not often that someone you don't know will ask if the seat beside you in the pew is taken.

And so, *we have to do the asking*. We need to *find those who are alone, or confused, or hurt, or seeking*, on a desert road perhaps...those who are in need, and ***we take the seat beside them***.

You see instead of asking "Are you saved?", "Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior" – maybe it would be more effective to ask a different kind of question.

Maybe we should ask, "***Is this seat taken? May I sit beside you for awhile and listen.***"

Philip sat beside that man.

How many lives might we impact if we love our neighbors enough to just ***sit beside them***, and listen to them, and share the good things we know about God's love.

Jesus said, "***you are my witnesses***"...(not my attorneys)

We don't have to prove anything cause...

what does witness mean?

It means we tell our story.

Our experience of Jesus.

No one can argue with your story! So what could be easier than to tell someone genuinely, from the heart when the time is right, (someone who might be on a desert road) what God has done for you in Christ...that's easy

Attorneys are the ones who have to prove things. We get to just be witnesses. The Holy Spirit will do the convicting.

So Summing this all up:

We share our faith by how we live, and what we say. Both are important.

We share our faith verbally, like Phillip by...doing the following

Look for the Divine Appointment – listen to the Holy Spirit and follow. Often you will find that God will lead you to those on a desert road – those who are struggling.

Meet the person where they are and listen to their concerns. Sit with them. Build a relationship.

When the time is right share YOUR story – be the witness, not the attorney

Remember! Acceptance of the good news is not your responsibility

Randy Frazey shares how he had been in Texas for 10 years serving a church and then suddenly felt God calling him to Chicago to work on a connectional ministry in a big church there – small groups, mentoring, discipleship making.

So the family pulled up roots and moved to Chicago – new neighborhood/ And one of the things his wife and he were always committed to is getting to know their neighbors. So they invited the neighbors next door Sam and Jenny to their home many times – they sat with them. They heard their stories. They listened. They played golf, and went to the kids sports together etc. etc.

One day Sam rang the doorbell and when Randy opened the door he knew something was wrong. The father was in a huge crisis that threatened to tear apart their family.

Once again Randy sat with him, and listened. This was the opening – this was the desert road.

And Randy at this point asked a question. Did Sam want to hear his story? Then he shared his story with his neighbor of how Jesus had changed him. He gave Sam a Bible and told him to read John's gospel. They prayed together and Sam left.

A little later in the evening Randy got a phone call. It was Sam. He wanted to know how many times he should read John's gospel. He had already read it 3X. He couldn't put it down.

Do you see how the Holy Spirit was doing the convicting. That's how Sam and also Jenny became Christians.

Randy shares that his work at the big church in Chicago basically failed. After 2 years they moved back to Texas.

And as he was praying about it – asking the Lord why on earth he sent them from Texas to Chicago for seemingly a failed ministry attempt the Lord spoke to his heart. "My call to you had nothing to do with the big church. It had to do with Sam and Jenny. I love them so much. I sent you there to Chicago for them."

Let's be all in for people the way that God is all in for them...with our...heart, soul and mind...lets share our faith with others. Love God that much. Get behind his party line with everything we've got. Throw yourself into this campaign...to share your faith with others.

Amen.