

The Church Defined: Introduce People to Jesus – Part 5

*Introduce People to Jesus Christ
Equip People with a Faith that Works
Live as People with Purpose*

Why we introduce people to Jesus.

- Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8-9

How we introduce people to Jesus.

*- 1 Peter 3:15; John 1:32-34, 35-37, 40-46; 1 Peter 2:9-10;
2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Mark 16:20*

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The Church Defined

Introduce People to Jesus

Here we are! It's been a long time coming, but here we are. The pews are all gone from the sanctuary and the process of painting has begun. A few of the folks in our church were able to take some of the pews and chairs, but I'm excited to tell you some news. Last Sunday while we were worshiping in those pews for the last time, Pastor Roger received a phone call. There was a church in Fife, Washington that heard we were looking for a home for our pews. This past week, folks from the Showers of Blessings Pentecostal Church brought a truck and went home with twenty of our pews and most of the chairs. It's a Samoan church that had just moved into a larger facility but needed some pews. There's more: when they moved into a larger building, they sold the old building to another church, and they were sad that they left their pews behind. Guess what color their old pews were? Orange! They were so excited. Praise God! So for over 50 years we've been warming up those pews for the Samoan Pentecostals! We're being multicultural more than we even know!

Now, I know *these* chairs are not the most comfortable, but don't worry – we won't be in here for long – only about six weeks or so. Spending time in here and in these chairs will make you appreciate the new ones even more!

Over the last few Sundays some of you have shared your God stories with us – you wrote down on cards what God has done in your life while you've been worshiping here at West Valley Church. We've printed those stories, and they are on the wall for you to read. Those are great stories! We are doing that to remind ourselves that God has done great things in our lives and to encourage us that God will keep making new amazing stories in the days ahead!

One of those stories happened to Rocky Fleming just recently. I'll let Rocky tell his story – watch the screen!

Doesn't that make you want to praise the Lord?! It makes me so happy for Rocky and so thankful to God.

These stories remind us that God is working in and through the church. That's what this sermon series is about. For the last four Sundays, we've looked at the Bible's metaphors and meaning for the church, and we've looked at our unity as a Spirit-filled, Christ-like body of followers of Jesus whose power, riches, and purpose are found in our calling to reconcile people to Jesus and to each other. We saw last week in the book of Ephesians that Paul calls it our "ministry of reconciliation," and that's a primary part of our purpose as a church. The first part of our church's mission statement is all about this ministry of reconciliation. Our mission has guided us for the last fifteen years, and it is this:

Introduce people to Jesus Christ

Equip people with a faith that works

Live as people with purpose.

Today we are going to explore that first part of our mission – what Paul called reconciling people to God – what we call introducing people to Jesus.

Let's start with the start...

Why we introduce people to Jesus

Why do we need to introduce people to Jesus? Why can't Jesus do that himself – why does he need us? Or why don't the pastors do that – why should *I* do that?

Those are valid questions, and the Bible has the answer – that is, if we believe the Bible is true and is for each of us. Jesus gives very clear instructions to us on this.

After Jesus had died on the cross in our place and risen from the dead and before he ascended into heaven, there were forty days that he had important conversations with his disciples and gave them instructions for what they were to do until Jesus comes back. We understand that those instructions were not just for the immediate disciples; these are instructions for *every* follower of Jesus until he returns. And here are those instructions:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, niv)

That is called the "Great Commission." It's "great" because it comes from no higher authority than Jesus, and it is the primary thing that every Christian is to do. It's called a "commission" because Jesus is telling us to share in his mission – we have a co-mission with Jesus.

That mission is to tell other people about who Jesus is and what he can do for them. It's as simple as that.

In fact, it is one of the main reasons we have been given the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit makes us holy and empowers us to tell other people who Jesus is and what he can do for them.

The great commission is part of Jesus' teaching during his last forty days on earth until he comes back. But we also have the *very last* thing Jesus said. Guess what it's about? It's about introducing people to Jesus. Jesus tells them and us that the reason we will receive the Holy Spirit is so that we can tell other people about him. This is what it says:

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. (Acts 1:8-9, nlt)

Last words are important, especially Jesus' last words. It wasn't like Jesus was saying, "Oh yea, one last thing before I forget." Everything Jesus did led up to these instructions for us. He intentionally gave us these last words. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. Power to do what? To be Jesus' witness, telling people everywhere about him.

We have the power to introduce people to Jesus – the Holy Spirit himself. The question is then...

How we introduce people to Jesus?

The key is in that word that Jesus used to describe what we do: "witness." You might have heard Christians talk about "witnessing" or "being a witness." That sounds kind of weird or mysterious, or we think it means we have to be able to know everything the Bible says. Or we have to know all the theology that goes with it so we can win a debate. Some people might have told you that, but it's not true at all. Introducing people to Jesus is really very easy: a witness simply tells people what they know. Let's say that you saw a car accident. If you were called into a trial as a witness, you are being asked to tell what you saw or what you know about the accident. You would not be asked to explain the engineering of the vehicle that made its crumple zones do what they did. You would not be asked to explain the way a combustion engine works, or the ways the hydraulic brakes engage. You would just be asked to describe what you saw. That's it. *That* is how we introduce people to Jesus. We simply tell people what we know about who Jesus is and what he's done for us – just like you saw Rocky do earlier. Just like so many of you did with your stories that we've put on the wall. By the way, we've got more of those cards at the temporary Welcome Center – if you've got a story you want to share, you can write it down and we'll collect them and add them to the wall.

Introducing people to Jesus is not a sales pitch. You are not trying to talk people into anything. That's why we use the term "introduce people to Jesus." We don't save people – that's God's job. We don't convince or convict people – that's the Holy Spirit's job. We simply tell people our story. If you try to make a sales pitch, it's over.

Years ago when I was a youth pastor in the Boise area, we had taken the youth group up to a place north of Boise called "Zim's Hot Springs." While we were there, I met a guy about my age, and we struck up a conversation. He was a really nice guy, also from Boise. We decided to meet for breakfast the next week. I thought, "This is great! I'm going to have a friend who's not in the church." That's not easy for pastors because almost all of our relationships are with people in the church. So I was excited when the morning came to have breakfast together and I could get to know my new friend. While we waited for breakfast, he began asking questions about my life, which I thought was nice. But I could tell he was trying to direct the conversation somewhere. Then he said, "What if you could make enough money to support your work with youth and give away as much as you want, and even retire early?" I *knew* it. He was giving me a multi-level marketing pitch. I knew it because I'd heard the exact same pitch many times before from others. I shouldn't say what company it was, but I will, it was Amway.

I was so disappointed. I thought I had a new friend. Instead, he was using me to set me up for a sales pitch so I could make money under him in the pyramid scheme. I offered to still be friends, just without the sales pitch. He never spoke to me again. I could tell you who it was, but I won't because he's still the weatherman on one of the local Boise news channels. I guess being a weatherman didn't pay very well. But that's what some Christians do.

Listen: you are not selling anybody anything. All you are doing is loving people enough that, when God gives you the opportunity, you share your story. Don't force it – just tell it. That's why the Bible says:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15, niv)

Share your story whenever someone asks. But don't sell anything – share your story nicely and respectfully.

Every person in this room or watching online who is a Christian is a witness – you have a story to share about Jesus – who he is and what he's done for you.

There are all kinds of examples of people doing this in the New Testament.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John we see John the Baptist. John the Baptist is not the same John who wrote the Gospel – different dudes. But John is out baptizing people in the wilderness when Jesus approaches, and Jesus gets baptized by John. Then they see the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove. That's where we pick it up:

Then John testified (*did what?*), "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon (Jesus). I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God." (John 1:32-34, nlt)

What did it say John did? He testified. What does a witness do? Testifies. John wasn't telling people something he did not know. John told people what he saw and knew about Jesus. That's all you and I need to do, too: tell people what Jesus has done for you. What you tell people won't be the same as what I tell people – or the same as anyone else, because he's done different things in your life than he has in mine or others. *You* have a story to tell!

So then, right away we see John the Baptist introducing his disciples to Jesus:

The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. (John 1:35-37, nlt)

Jesus gained new disciples because John simply told them what he knew about Jesus.

But then, it goes a step further: after John introduced his friends to Jesus, they in turned introduced their friends to Jesus. Watch this:

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").

Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”).

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Come, follow me.” Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s hometown.

Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

“Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” “Come and see for yourself,” Philip replied. (John 1:40-46, nlt)

Because John introduced his friends to Jesus, those people became Jesus’ disciples, and then later those same people became Jesus’ apostles, and through them the Church was born in the book of Acts, and the Church spread from there throughout the world as they introduced more people to Jesus. Those people introduced others, who eventually introduced *you* to Jesus, and now you too are a believer. How many people will be introduced to Jesus through you? How many historic changes will God make in the world because you introduced people to Jesus? Or, on the other hand, how many things will *not* happen because you will not?

God clearly tells us that he has a message for us to give to others. 1 Peter 2:9 says:

“But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.” (1 Peter 2:9-10, tmt)

Have you had Jesus Christ make a night and day difference in your life? Yes. Every one of us. So tell others. This is what we saw last week in the teaching from the Apostle Paul, when he said that each of us have this ministry of reconciliation. The Bible says:

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20-21, niv)

God is making his appeal to others through you. That means something very important: when you share your story, God is working in *their* lives, too. God is working to confirm and affirm the message in their lives. In Mark’s gospel we’re told of how this worked. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the disciples got busy introducing people to Jesus. Listen to what it says:

And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. (Mark 16:20, rsv)

Jesus was at work confirming their message in whatever way was necessary for the listener to realize who Jesus is and what he can do for them. When you share your story, God is at work in supernatural ways in the life of the person you are talking to!

You are the authority on your story. You say, “this is what happened to me.” How do I argue with that? It happened to you, and you know it happened.

People love to hear personal stories. And they remember them. They can relate to them. It builds a relational bridge. You're not selling anything; when your friends and loved ones ask you about your faith, you share your story.

In our postmodern world, your story is a very effective witness. A lot of people today aren't going to listen to the Bible. They don't accept the Bible. They don't believe the Bible is completely true. Their attitude is, "It's true if you want to believe but it's not true if you don't want to believe it." If you start quoting from the Bible, forget it because they don't accept the Bible. And they don't trust organized religion. But they'll listen to your story.

You are actually far more effective in introducing people to Jesus than I am as a pastor. I've started spiritual conversations with people in restaurants and airplanes and all over. It is always very interesting to hear about people's lives. But then sometimes they get around to asking me about my life. But when they do, once they ask what I do for a living, it gets awkward. Then they think I'm a salesman. When I share as a pastor, I'm considered the paid professional. In their minds, I'm the Amway guy. They say, "We expect him to talk about God. He's a pastor." But when unbelievers hear *you* talk about Jesus, it's your life. Who has more credibility? The paid salesman or the satisfied customer? No question about it. You have a stronger testimony than I do. When you are talking to a friend, you are sharing out of your own life experience. What if they have questions that you don't know the answer to? Be honest – tell them you don't know but you will find out. Then you can talk to me, or bring them in to talk to me if they are interested.

Do you see – introducing people to Jesus is simply about telling people you know and love who Jesus is and what he's done for you, and you trust God to work in their lives from there.

There's one more story we want to share with you today. It's Crystal Scott's story. If you don't know Crystal and Charley, you should. They are great people. If you get to know them, they'll tell you their stories, and you'd probably be surprised by how Jesus has worked in their life. We'd like to have Crystal share her story with you. Watch this.

Closing comments, salvation, prayer

104 class invitation.

May God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement help you to live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ toward the other. And then all of us can praise the Lord together with one voice, giving glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6, 1b)