

Compelled by Love
2 Corinthians 5:14-21
Rev. Brian Bill
October 18-19, 2025

On behalf of all the pastors at Edgewood, thank you so much for the pastor appreciation gifts last weekend! This past Wednesday night, in honor of Pastor Appreciation month, the children in our Awana ministry filled out job descriptions for the pastors at Edgewood. While there's quite a discrepancy related to the number of hours a pastor should work in a week, I'm glad we get regular snack breaks. Another job description said pastors should make *"Two Thousand Million dollars each week because they teach us about Jesus and that's important."* One child thinks a pastor should never get a vacation while another said we should vacation in Hawaii. Regarding dress code, one hip kid said pastors should wear T-shirts, while another wants pastors to wear Tuxedos to work.

The Lord is at work at Edgewood from Awana through SecondWinders. I love watching how the love of the Lord compels lost people to put their faith in Jesus Christ. Get ready to smile as I share some recent salvation stories.

- Last weekend, at the end of the sermon, I invited people to put their trust in Christ for forgiveness of sins, and to raise their hand if they had done so. In the 10:45 service, one young man shot his hand up so quickly he seemed to jump out of his seat. The congregation broke out into applause because we just witnessed a spiritual baby being born.
- After one of the services, a young couple told me their son had professed Christ and now wants to be baptized.
- Later that night, I saw a Facebook post from Aubree Lee. One of her daughter's good friends attended the service with them and Aubree followed up by asking this friend if she had received Christ. Listen to Aubree in her own words (I have her permission to share this): *"I was so thankful she joined us for church this morning as she confirmed she wasn't 100% sure about that [receiving Christ], so we replayed Pastor Brian's prayer in the car, and she accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior right then and there...I'm so grateful for God's grace and mercy and the fact that He died on the cross for our sins and conquered it all by raising from the dead three days later...I had her permission to post, and we most definitely had a celebratory lunch at Texas Roadhouse for her spiritual birthday!"*

- I reached out to another new person at EBC this week. Here's what I texted him: *"I see God drawing you to Himself. I'm eager to hear from you soon that you've received Christ as your Lord and Savior."* On Wednesday, he sent me a text: *"I've acknowledged my sins and know that only through Christ can I be saved. I'm still very new and learning, but I trust that God will guide me."* I responded, *"Sounds like you received Christ!"* He texted back, *"I have! I appreciate the encouragement and guidance from everyone at Edgewood."*
- On Monday, I talked with Edgewood member Brad Lester. He's been stocking the Little Free Library located on the bike path at Ben Butterworth with *Anchor for the Soul* books and *Ready or Not* booklets. He fills it several times a week and estimates hundreds of gospel presentations have been distributed. He also met a homeless woman through this ministry and has helped her get the services she needs.
- On Wednesday of this week, I connected with someone who has been coming to Edgewood for about six weeks. He texted me, *"I need the Lord."* We met early on Thursday. One of his first questions was, *"What's my next step?"* I told him it was time for him to get saved. He repented and received Christ by praying out loud at Vibrant Coffeehouse. Here's what he sent me a couple hours later: *"Thank you for meeting with me today. I felt a peace come over me. I'm gonna live for Christ to the best of my abilities."* BTW, as a kid, he came to Edgewood on the bus ministry! He's now ready for baptism.
- On Monday, I received a message from someone who lives in Arizona to let me know that EBC attender Steve Vance had reached out to her: *"Steve asked me this past weekend, if I've been saved. I was taken aback by this question because it was coming from Steve. He called me and we talked. I have accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior...I believe God had Steve ask me that for a reason...Steve is a new man; I see God in him...Keep speaking God's word, it really is making a difference."*
- On the same day, Steve also shared the gospel with a guy he knows. He sent me this text after they met: *"My buddy was just saved in the back of Happy Joe's parking lot."*

- As we've been celebrating what God is doing in schools and colleges through the ministry of FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes), we've been hearing that several of the huddles have run out of Bibles. On Monday, the EdgeMissions team proposed to the Deacons that we purchase 200 Bibles. The Deacon Board unanimously approved this on Tuesday night.
- As you may know, *Anchor for the Soul* was written by Ray Pritchard, who is the president of Keep Believing Ministries, one of our Go Team partners. Check out these two letters Pastor Ray received from prisoners: *"I have been godless for the last many years and have re-given my soul to Christ. All because of your book! You have made it very easy to understand and you answered the difficult questions I've been struggling with for years. I also tormented myself thinking I wasn't good enough for God because of my lifestyle. I'm by no means cured but am on my way and at least I know if I die, I'll be in heaven."* Here's a testimony from another inmate: *"I actually found this book under a mattress in a prison cell. I was in a desperate search for salvation, and behold God had that book in that cell under that mattress for me to find! Hallelujah!"* BTW, these books are taken into the Rock Island County jail by our jail ministry team every Friday night.
- The Deacons also approved a request from Go Team Partners Jim and Shelley Dinsmore. They started a school in the jungles of Guatemala, and they've had so many new students that they've run out of supplies. Because of your generous giving, Edgewood will be able to meet this need.
- Riley and Debbie Shelton serve in India and shared this report in their recent newsletter: *"The LORD has been working in the hearts of people in India; there have been more salvations and miracle healings!"*
- Craig and Lindsey Stevenson serve with Manna International. Here's what they write: *"The MANNA Nutrition Center in Tinca has been, over time, a place where many children have found food, love and support, but especially where they first heard about the Lord Jesus. Among these children was Rostas Camelia, who grew up here, received a hot meal every day and felt God's love through the people who served. The greatest gift she received, however, was salvation, because in this place she opened her heart and received the Lord Jesus as her personal Savior."*

- IT and ST serve in a large Asian country. After describing how a man recently became a Christian, they shared that his wife had not yet been saved (they write in code): *“As we continued to ask probing good news questions and explained it, [she] was clearly emotional. As we approached the end, I asked her, ‘Have you ever done this before?’ She simply replied, ‘No.’ Yet I could see on her face that she wanted to so I prompted her, ‘Would you like to?’ It was like she was just waiting for that invitation, and emphatically said, ‘Yes!’ She proceeded to talk to our father through priceless tears of repentance. She asked for forgiveness...that same day, we proceeded to teach what the book says about dunking. She wanted to do it that very next Sunday!”*
- ST and BT serve in another Asian country: *“...we were able to organize VBS at 45 locations, welcoming 2,462 children...even more amazing, 227 precious children chose to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior.”*
- Jim and Sybil Eberhard report from Kenya: *“After teaching and giving the invitation, a large group of women came out of the church to pray. The pastor’s wife was praying with them, and she told me 16 of them had come to be saved!”*
- Youth Hope ministered to 395 kids and teens at Camp Summit this summer! More than 75 campers dedicated their lives to Jesus!
- This summer, CEF Clubs reached 119 kids with the gospel and 27 of them accepted Jesus as their Savior!
- At Camp Forest Springs, 34 young people placed their faith in Christ as Savior during their youth camps!

BTW, I encourage you to pick up the Go Team prayer booklet located on the table in front of the Missions Display in the north lobby to help you pray for our partners.

- I have one more story to share. Marcy Kongkousonh, our children’s ministry director, and Tiffany Masengarb, her assistant, resourced two other gospel preaching churches in Rock Island (Gospel Community Church and Rock Island Bible Church) with our summer VBS decorations and extra resources. Here’s what Pastor Doug Rowland shared when I asked him how

things were going at their combined VBS this week (they do this in the fall when RI schools are on break): “*Man...so well. Around 60 kids and 40 volunteers. It’s been incredible this week. This has been the best week of ministry in our church in the seven years we’ve been in existence. We’ve had new kids every night and have had many gospel conversations. The building looks great - thank you Edgewood!*” Let’s pause and pray for these two churches right now.

I sense you want to break out into praise for what God is doing, so let’s stand and give Him the glory by singing the Doxology together.

Sing the Doxology

Let’s remain standing as we read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Here’s the main idea: *The love of Christ compels us to share His love with the lost.*

1. The compulsion we feel. When we ponder the love of Christ, we can’t help but want to share that love with others. This is stated in verses 14-15: “*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*” The word “*controls*” means, “*to compel or constrain*” and has the idea of “*being compressed forcibly so as to push out.*”

One pastor offers this great perspective: *“Being a Christian does not mean merely believing in our head that Christ died for us. It means ‘being constrained’ by that reality. The truth presses in on us; it grips and holds; it impels and controls. It surrounds us and won’t let us run from it.”*

The phrase **“for all”** is used twice and is a term for substitution. Jesus died in our place, on our behalf. I think of Isaiah 53:5-6: ***“But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace...and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”***

Hudson Taylor, the pioneer missionary to China, was motivated for missions not by a sense of duty, but because of the compelling love of Christ. He realized that if Christ died for him, then he could no longer live for himself. That truth became the driving force behind his obedience and endurance through years of trial and isolation. God used this verse to ignite his heart with a holy passion to reach the unreached in China. The same love that rescued him also propelled him to go with the gospel. When we’ve been gripped by the love of Christ, we can’t help but share it with the world.

2. The contrast we see. Because the love of Christ controls us, we’re compelled to tell others about Him. But first, we must see people as Jesus sees them. Notice verse 16: ***“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer.”*** Instead of viewing people through the filters of race, ethnicity, economic status, ideology, education, appearance, or lifestyle, we must see them as eternal souls who will live forever.

When a plane goes down, reporters don’t just say how many passengers were lost; they tell us how many *souls* perished. Why? Because even the world recognizes that every person is more than flesh and blood. Every face you pass, every voice you hear, every hand you shake belongs to someone who will spend eternity either with God in Heaven or separated from Him in Hell forever. That reality ought to shake us, stir us, and send us to rescue perishing souls.

C.S. Lewis put it like this: *“There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal...it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit.”*

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3. The change we experience. Listen to verse 17: ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*** If you have been born again through the new birth, you are a brand-new creation. The phrase ***“in Christ”*** indicates someone who has been saved from their sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word ***“new”*** means, ***“new in quality, freshly made or created.”*** When you are saved, you literally become someone you never were before.

The ***“old has passed away,”*** means the old life has ***“perished.”*** The use of ***“behold”*** is designed to call attention to this fact, ***“Look! Don’t miss this because the new has come.”*** If you are saved, you have been created anew, and the old you has been abolished. As Jesus declared in John 3:3: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** *Reconciliation is the result of regeneration.*

Over thirty years ago, I read a very captivating book by David Needham called, ***“Birthright: Christian, Do You Know Who You Are?”*** I ponder the premise often: ***“A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. Mark this—a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before.”***

4. The calling we receive. Our calling is spelled out clearly in verse 18. Those who are reconciled are called to be reconcilers: ***“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*** The phrase ***“all this is from God”*** places the emphasis on God. Our enmity against God has been eliminated by God Himself! I think of Jonathan Edwards’ famous quote: ***“You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.”*** I provide my sin, and He takes care of everything else.

The word ***“reconciliation”*** means, ***“to restore to friendship by bringing harmony between enemies.”*** The opposite of reconciliation is alienation. At its root it refers to ***“change, or exchange.”*** In Hebrew, it means ***“to take pleasure in.”*** Ancient Greeks used this word to describe two people in previous conflict who are now at peace with one another.

Notice how Christ ***“reconciled us to Himself.”*** We can’t make ourselves right with God because our relationship with Him has been ruptured, and God’s wrath is

rightfully directed against us. If there's going to be peace, He's the only one who can make it happen.

As recipients of reconciliation, we've now been given the responsibility of the **"ministry of reconciliation."** The word **"gave"** has the idea of *"entrusting to"* and *"bestowing upon."* The word **"ministry"** is the word from which we get "deacon" and means *"service."* We are saved to serve and to send. 2 Corinthians 3:6 says God **"has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant."**

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5. The content we share. Once we receive the miracle of the new birth and strive to live out our roles as ministers of reconciliation, verse 19 tells us we must get the gospel right: ***"That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."*** love the phrase, ***"not counting their trespasses against them."*** The word **"count"** means to, *"impute, calculate, or reckon."* Because of the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, when we are born again, no charges are counted against us, since the righteous wrath of God was fully satisfied through the shedding of His blood.

The miracle of reconciliation comes about by being reborn. When you come to Christ, your guilt is gone, you are made new, and your relationship with God is restored. Your enmity with God has been eliminated through Christ's substitutionary atonement. Propitiation has taken place, meaning God's righteous wrath has been fully and finally satisfied, and you have been adopted into His forever family as a beloved son or daughter of the Father.

The word **"message"** is the Greek word *logos*, which in John's gospel is a clear reference to Jesus. Our message is not how to *"Have your best life now"* or *"How to be healthy and wealthy and happy"* or *"Name it and claim it."* Our message is the gospel that brings redemption and reconciliation. We have been ***"entrusted"*** with this precious message, which refers to *"depositing, laying down, and assigning."* We are obligated to share the message of reconciliation with those who are still at war with God.

6. The commission we fulfill. In verse 20, we're called to passionately urge people to be reconciled to God: ***"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be***

reconciled to God.” We are more than messengers; we are representatives of the Sovereign who sent us.

We have been called by the King to give a message of reconciliation to those who are in rebellion. As ambassadors, we have the authority and obligation to act on His behalf. We are sent with the endorsement of the King and are entrusted to speak on His behalf. John 17:18: ***“As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”***

I love the reminder of how God is ***“making His appeal through us.”*** We are simply the instruments God chooses to use. This takes pressure off because it’s not all up to us. Our responsibility is to enter conversations with people so we can make a bridge to the gospel. The results are all up to Him. If someone is interested, God will make it clear. When they’re not, just smile, say a prayer, and see who else God wants you to speak with.

When we do have an opportunity to have a gospel conversation, we’re to ***“implore”*** people to be reconciled to God. ***“Implore”*** means, ***“to urge, to beseech, to beg.”*** The idea is to make an impassioned plea. When you think about it, the only reason we are still here on earth is to urge people to be reconciled to God. If you only have brief window to witness to someone, this summary of the gospel may be helpful to remember.

- The gospel in four words: *Jesus took my place.*
- The gospel in three words: *Him for me.*
- The gospel in two words: *Substitutionary atonement.*
- The gospel in one word: *Reconciliation.*

That’s the message we’ve received, and that’s the mission we’re responsible to carry out. Let’s make sure we’re living on mission by glorifying God and making disciples of Jesus in our families, among our neighbors, and among the nations.

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7. The Christ we proclaim. Verse 21 contains a concise statement of what Christ completed on the cross for our reconciliation: ***“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** Our sins were placed on Christ and in their place, Christ gave us His righteousness.

When we repent and receive Christ, we are reckoned as righteous. We could call this the “great exchange.” God treated the One who knew no sin as sin, so our rottenness could be exchanged for His righteousness. I like how one commentor said it: *“The one who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we who knew no righteousness might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

So, here’s a question: Do you want to be reconciled to God so you can become someone you’ve never been before? Are you ready for God to write your salvation story?

Gospel Invitation

We began with salvation stories and we’re going to end with some more as we focus on how God is using Operation Christmas Child. With millions of shoeboxes distributed each year, the number of Gospel opportunities around the world is incredible. Check out what God does every 24 hours through this ministry and then listen for how you can get personally involved.

OCC Video

Operation Christmas Child Interview (Sheila and Jodie)

New Member: Jaime Larson (9:00 am)

Let’s stand for this closing benediction from Philemon 6. Our next sermon series will be a verse-by-verse study of this remarkable, and yet often overlooked book: *“I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”*