

Gospel Ice Breakers
September 7, 2014

On the back of your sermon outline, at the top, please write down all the states you have lived in. The state of confusion doesn't count. We're only talking about the 50 United States. Don't count other countries or U.S. territories and such. Also do not count states you have just driven through or visited. Only count the states you have moved your residence and mail to. Don't forget to include the state you currently live in.

Okay, on the back of your sermon insert, in the middle of the page, you see numbers 1 through 3. Go to three people. Ask them their name and write that on your paper. Then ask them to name all the states they have lived in. You don't have to write the names of the states. Just write down how many they have lived in. Now there are several people who, for health reasons, need to stay where they are. I'll ask them to raise their hands. Make sure these are included. Three of you will need to come up to the railing here and speak to the pianist. One more instruction: you can't use the same people as those in your family. This will force you to move around the room, which is part of the idea of the activity. You have three minutes. Go!

What we just did is called an ice breaker. This kind of activity is called an ice breaker. An ice breaker is a game or activity that is used to start a party, a conference, a training seminar, etc. The purpose of an ice breaker is to break down the awkward tension of a new group of people. If you can get people talking to each other and laughing, they are more likely to be at ease as you try to accomplish your goals for the get together.

This morning, I want to talk to you about a different kind of ice breakers. These ice breakers are emphasized in the New Testament part of the Bible. Notice that we have left out part of the name of the title this morning. Anyone want to guess what kind of ice breakers I'm talking about this morning?

The subject this morning is **gospel ice breakers**. **The word Gospel means good news**, in this case it refers to the good news about Jesus. The gospel is the good news that in Jesus we can be given forgiveness of sin and inherit eternal life. That is what the word gospel means.

The subject this morning is gospel ice breakers. You won't find that term in the Bible. But the concept of gospel ice breakers is all through the New Testament. Gospel ice breakers are a key part of what Christians are supposed to be doing in everyday life.

Jesus introduced us to gospel ice breakers in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your **good deeds** and praise your Father in heaven.

We want to introduce people to Jesus. But people can't see Jesus. Jesus is in heaven. They can't see Jesus, but they can see us. And if we can get their attention in just the right way, they may become interested in Jesus through us. The right way of getting

noticed is through the doing of good deeds. When you do a good deed for someone who already worships God, the person will praise God for your good deed on their behalf. When you do a good deed for someone who does not worship God, they may become interested in Jesus through your kind action towards them.

Good deeds create an experience in which the other person feels cared about. His curiosity may be aroused. He becomes interested in why you helped him. Let me give you an example of this.

Recently I was watching a man tell his story online. He and his wife had been members of a religious group that did not believe in blood transfusions. Their little daughter was very ill and close to death. Doctors told the parents that without a blood transfusion the little girl would die. But the parents said no to the transfusion. The hospital called the police who got a court order ordering the transfusion. At that point the religious leaders ordered the parents to kidnap their daughter. When the parents refused, that religious group cut them off. The transfusion was carried out and later, the parents were able to bring their daughter home.

The parents were very discouraged. Their daughter was alive, but they were cut off from their only support group. One day a neighbor lady, who had heard they had a sick child, knocked at their door. She had prepared them a meal. He says, "This blew us away. We were taught that we were the only true Christians. Everyone else was a part of Satan's world. But there was a problem. This woman" was not of our religious group" and she was showing love to us. This one act of love set in motion a search for the real truth. I had spent a lifetime arguing with preachers... about theology and doctrine, but nothing could explain this one act of love." He and his wife began to read the Bible and found eternal life in Jesus.

(<https://www.truelife.org/videos/are-jehovah-s-witnesses-right>)

One, simple good deed of taking a meal to a hurting family played a key part in them becoming Christians. The kindness expressed through that meal was a gospel ice breaker.

This is what Jesus calls us to do. This is what is emphasized all through the New Testament. God uses such actions to draw people to Jesus through us. Look at another passage. Good deeds are not mentioned here, but I believe they are implied.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

What that means is to be ready to tell people why you are trusting in Jesus for eternal life. Eternal life is our Christian hope.

Now what circumstances could occur that would lead to someone asking you why you are a Christian? Maybe if you have not been a regular to church some friend or family might ask you why you have started going. But what other circumstances might the question be raised in someone's mind? I can't think of any.

In fact I can only remember one time that I was asked why I was a Christian. And it was asked by a coworker of mine in the midst of doing him a favor. He had to move some

stuff in his van and needed some help and had asked me to help him. As we finished and were talking, he asked me why I was a Christian.

If you do a good deed, a kind deed, a merciful deed towards someone, that can get the person's attention. God can use that to speak to his or her heart and move them to ask you a question about your faith. That is a great opportunity to tell someone about Jesus.

A good deed is you showing kindness to someone else. It might be a coworker, a family member, a neighbor, a stranger. It might even be an enemy. Jesus says to love your enemies and show them kindness. Good deeds of compassion, kindness, and mercy are attention getters like no others. This is our key truth this morning.

Good deeds can create good will which can create an openness to the Good News.

These good deeds are gospel ice breakers. The Holy Spirit can stir people's hearts and put the curious question in there that needs an answer. Some of you became a Christian just that way. It is pretty neat when you see that happen. This is how some of you became Christians.

One of the great things about gospel ice breakers is that anyone can do them. Witnessing is hard for introverts. It is hard for some extroverts too. Some people are talkers. They talk easily about all kinds of things. Others of us are not talkers. We just don't have much to say. And such people find it especially hard to open a conversation about spiritual things.

But good deeds are easy. All you have to do is have compassion for someone else and then act on that. You don't have to talk to do a good deed.

Good deeds don't take any special knowledge or skill. Good deeds don't take a knowledge of theology. Good deeds don't take spiritual maturity. Good deeds don't take a special kind of personality. Anyone can do good deeds. Children can do good deeds.

The church does good deeds too. Our flea market, which we hold as a free service to the community, is a good deed. Feeding the needy is a good deed. Providing school supplies to needy kids is a good deed. And our hope and prayer is that these good deeds will lead to someone becoming a Christian.

But the most effective good deeds are the one-on-one good deeds. These are when you, as in individual, do something kind, helpful, merciful, or generous for one other person directly. This is when it is most personal and shows the most compassion and caring, like the woman who brought over a meal to a hurting family. Anyone who can cook can do that. And if you can't cook, you could buy a meal and take it over to a neighbor.

Good deeds create good will which can create an openness to the Good News. This week, be looking and praying for people to help. As you become aware of needs, try to meet those needs. In this way you will serve Jesus and bring glory to His name.

Get up everyday and ask God, "Who can I help today, Lord? Who can I help?"

If you are talking to someone in need, ask them, "How can I help you?"

Invitation

The ultimate good work is to give your life for another person. This is what Jesus did for us. Jesus gave up his life for us on the cross. He could have avoided the cross. But He purposely gave Himself up to His enemies that they might kill Him.

They did not know that they were serving God's purposes by doing so. God accepts Jesus' death as the full payment for all of our sins. Therefore, if you put your faith in Jesus, God will forgive your sin and give you eternal life.

Today put your faith in Jesus. Today, receive Him as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord.

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Other New Testament passages on Good Deeds:

Matthew 25:34-40; Mark 14:6; Acts 9:36; Acts 10:4; 2 Corinthians 9:8;
Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 2:10; 5:10; 6:18;
Titus 2:14; 3:1, 8, 14; Hebrews 10:24; James 1:27; 2:14-18; 2:26; 3:13;
1 Peter 2:12