

Well, good morning. Look, we got some people still at the back. Are you all. Is there food back there still? Is that why you're all hanging out in the back?

Backity back. We grew up with the station wagon. Did you all grow up with a station wagon? We called it. There was the back, but then there was the backity back.

Yeah, we weren't the only ones. I thought that was unique to us. Hey, we're starting a new series. We just finished up Ashanna said a series on prayer. Great series.

I hope you all were encouraged by that to continue to pray even. Even when you don't feel like much is happening. God is always working and prayer is the avenue that he's. That he's told us he works through. So keep praying.

Before we jump into that, though, I want to take just a moment, I've got a note from Brad Pontius. Brad's our global missions director, and he was keeping updates with what's happening in Myanmar and in Thailand right now. Many of you know that they're having some devastating earthquakes. They're un. Trying to uncover a lot of the damage.

They're finding lots of death and destruction. And so he's been in partner. He's been in communication with our partners there. So far, our key partners are all right, but they're going in to help with the. With the cleanup, with the restoration process, uncovering and dealing with the aftermath of horrible destruction.

So I told him that we would spend just a few moments this morning lifting up our fellow believers in Myanmar. Kids, you're with us this morning. So here's what I want you to do. Just cause you're here, I'm gonna ask you to pray with us too, okay? So we're gonna pray for people who live in another part of the world far, far, far, far away from us.

They don't look like you and I. Mostly they live in. Many of them live in houses that are lot different than ours. They eat food that's a lot different than ours. They speak a language that's different than ours.

They go to schools that are a little bit different than ours, but they're still followers of Jesus. And so they're our brothers and sisters. And so we're going to pray for them this morning. So if you guys would all join us, we're just going to take a moment and just lift up our fellow brothers and sisters in Myanmar and in Thailand. Jesus, I lift up right now to you some dear friends of mine, Rob and Donna Ottenhoff.

And I know that they are right There in the epicenter of all of that,

helping to minister and to share the love of Jesus with those who are experiencing so much devastation. And Jesus, we just pray. We just pray that your peace and your presence would be so evident there in the midst of this horrible devastation, Lord, give opportunities to share your love. Provide resources through us and through other partners that exist around the globe. But Lord, we do pray that in the midst of this devastation that your spirit would move in just a unique way, just an alignment with and coming alongside what seems to be horrible.

You have a way of redeeming. And so, Lord, in the midst of this, we pray that your glory would shine and that you would receive it. You would receive glory. Lord, we pray for safety for those who are going into dangerous places. We pray for just the sustaining of life for those who are still under rubble and still in very difficult circumstances.

And Lord, again, we pray for an outpouring of love and support from the immediate neighborhoods that countries around this. But we also pray as the church comes together that you would receive glory from the way that we care and love for each other. Lord, be with those who are right there in the middle of it. In Jesus name, amen. Thank you for doing that with us.

Well, we started with a new series this morning called the Ripple Effect. Here's how I want to start it out. I want to talk about, you know, our team just got back from the footsteps of Paul. I want to go on that trip so bad. Maybe someday.

One of my favorite things about traveling is the airplane experience. Now, I don't love going through security. If you've ever done that, that is not a good look for me. I don't like that. I do not like the scanner device that feels intrusive to me.

And invariably, as my baggage goes through, I. I realized that I've packed a toothpaste thing that's just too big and you gotta toss it and you gotta buy another \$12 mini toothpaste in the airport. So I don't like that process. I don't like the seats. I don't know what it is.

Does anyone else experience this? Every time I get on a plane, the seats have gotten smaller. I don't know. And they're shortening the seatbelts. Now I'm pretty, pretty sure I don't like the food.

Anyone love airplane food? Don't even tell me about your great airplane food. First class is different. All right? First class is different.

Okay. Okay. Sometimes you have good airplane food. Someone in the back. You guys love airplane food.

Okay. That's all right. That's all right. I don't like paying extra for every little piece of luggage that I take. I don't like that.

But what I do love is that moment where you get all your stuff sorted out and you sit down in the seat and you got your little book, your mystery novel. You're gonna figure out who killed who. It's gonna be great. You've got five hours. We're the only interpersonal communication you're going to do as a stewardess asking what kind of soda you want to drink now.

I love that moment. Five hours. It's going to be great. Me, me and Poirot. It's going to be fantastic.

Because when I strap in and get my book, I feel like my vacation has really begun. The only little negative, niggling idea I have in my head when I'm sitting there, some of you will identify with this is the thought that goes through my head that at some point in this flight, I'm going to have to share Jesus with the person next beside me. Anyone know this? Anyone know this? Now, where does that come from?

I'll tell you. Growing up, we had revivals. The revivals would come through, and he would preach. He was an evangelist, and he would always talk about how we need to be sharing our faith. And the evangelist always had the airplane story.

Does anyone know what I'm talking about when I say the airplane story? Okay. The only other Pentecostal in the room right now knows this story. The airplane story is this. The preacher sits down, he's just minding his own business, and the person next to him says, I want to become a Christian.

What should I do? Now, it doesn't go quite like that, but there's always this engagement, and, you know, they ask, what do you do? Well, I'm a preacher. Oh, really? Tell me about your faith.

And before you know it, they've said the sinner's prayer, and they're going to baptize them when they get off the airplane. So I've heard these stories so much that I never fly without thinking maybe Jesus is going to ask me to say the sinner's prayer with this person beside me. Well, here's the truth. It's much more likely that you will be called upon to share your faith with someone you know versus some rando that you meet on a plane. So sharing your faith with someone you know can be maybe a little bit more intimidating than sharing it with some rando on a plane.

So today we're gonna walk through some I think some pretty practical ways to think about sharing our faith with the people in our lives that are far from God or at least moving in a general God direction,

but they're not quite there yet. They're natural ways so we can help our friends take their next step with Jesus. So I'm going to pray. I want you guys to turn to the book of Colossians. It's in the New Testament, about halfway, about three quarters of the way through your Bible.

No, it's closer to the end than 3/4. Find Colossians on your Bible app or in your phone. And then we are going to be in Colossians chapter four. You can hang out there for a little bit and I'm going to pray. Heavenly Father, as we open your word today, we pray that you will instruct us from it, encourage us from it, remind us of the things that are important to us that you want us to know from your word.

This is the way you speak to us generally. And so we want to have ears open and minds open to receive it. We know there's going to be good things there. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

As believers, God makes it pretty clear we have been commissioned to share our faith with others. The last thing Jesus told his disciples, or one of the last things Jesus told his disciples was in Matthew 28. And you know this passage, but we're going to throw up here anyway. Matthew 28, verse 18. Jesus came to them, his disciples, and he 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 to you. This is the commandment God gave us to share our faith with others. And at Sherwood Oaks, we take that very seriously. Several years ago, you might remember, if you've been here for a while, we did something called finding your one. And that one is that person in your life already in your life again.

Not someone you found yourself in line with at the Walmart checkout, not someone you're sitting beside on the airplane. God may use you in those instances, but generally the one said this. God has already put someone in your life. A family member, a coworker, a neighbor, someone you're connected with, someone you work out with at the gym. Someone in your life already that's not yet, doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus.

And you've been put in their life for a reason. You're there By God's intention. And so we took a year where we identified who that one was and we prayed for them. And as. And when the opportunity arose to share our faith with them, we said, we'll do it.

We won't jump into it too soon. We won't hesitate too long. We're just gonna be faithful as God gives opportunity. So I don't know. We did that as a church.

I've got a couple of one stories. I know Susan has a one story. Maybe you guys have some one stories from that time. But that was a powerful thing for me. It changed the way I thought about sharing my faith.

It gave me some really practical insights into how to share my faith and to prepare the one, my one to hear my faith story. So we're gonna walk through some of those things, and we're gonna use a little acronym. Bless B L E S S. And just read those off with me. Begin with prayer.

Listen well, eat together. Ah, you didn't see that one coming, did you? Serving and then sharing your story. So we're gonna walk through those this morning. Real practical.

You can take notes if you want to. We'll make them available afterwards if you want those as well. But the very first thing we do when we think about the person that God wants us to share our faith with, we begin to pray for them. Now, two years ago, I was privileged to baptize someone I love very dearly. And when they asked me to baptize them, I was sort of surprised, because when we were asked to name our one, I admit his name came through my head.

But he was a long shot, and I didn't want to pressure God. So I gave him someone easy. I said, yes, that person could be my one. But. But, Lord, here's.

How about this one right here? Well, within two days, I baptized the easy one. So God says, okay, yeah, let's get him out of the way. Now I want you to begin praying for the real one. So I did.

I started praying a little bit. Not a lot, a little bit. And increasingly, opportunities arose to have conversations that led to faith questions, all initiated by him, by the way. I didn't go out of my way to have faith conversations with this guy, but he was usually upset about something, angry, anxious, frustrated. And I'd listen and nod my head and sort of help him process through some of the stuff and then leave the conversation.

And I'd walk away going, should I have done more? Should I have walked him through Romans road? Should I have shared John 3:16 with him? What should I have done. All I'm doing is pray.

But it turns out the prayer is pretty important. And this is where we get to Colossians, chapter four. Paul says this to the Colossians. He goes, you need to devote yourself to prayer, to prayer. I must tell Jesus.

I love that song. I must tell Jesus not just all my troubles, but all the people that I love, that I care about, people that I'm having issues with. Bring those to Jesus. He goes, you need to devote

yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And then Paul says this.

Pray for us that God may open a door for our message, that God may provide opportunity so that we can proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. He begins with this.

Pray devotedly. Pray. Pray for an open heart. Pray for an open door. Pray for opportunities to speak into the life of this one someone that is in your life, that God's put you there for an intention.

When we think about evangelism, it is not about beating down doors. It's not about forcing conversations. It's about asking God to say, hey, before I walk into this situation, can you go ahead and open the door? I'll tell you, though, I would leave those conversations thinking, should I do more? At times, prayer can feel like a pretty limp approach.

You know what I mean? It's like. I mean, surely there's something more tangible to do. Yet within a year of just praying for him and having some odd conversations, he said, I want you to baptize me. Why?

What happened in that space? Well, a lot. But the second thing that was going on was that I was listening. I was listening well, so I didn't go in to these conversations, just ready to give him all the answers. So many of those conversations happened during COVID which seems like years and years and years ago, but it wasn't that long ago.

And I don't know if you were there in that space, but he was in the space where the world was ending, like it was over. Like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were galloping down 15th Street. That's how real the end was for him. Now, I'm not saying anything about God's timetable, but I am saying that in that space, his brain was working overtime on end stuff. So he was talking about a lot of this stuff, and I was just Praying for the right words to.

To respond to his questions. Which puts me in mind of Paul who says, pray that I can talk clearly. I can proclaim the message clearly. And what does Paul mean by clearly? Does he just mean I should, I want to enunciate?

Well, no. Paul says, help me keep the message focused on the main thing. And what is the main thing? The main thing is always one person. Who is that person?

I hear it over there. Jesus. Keep the focus on Jesus. Again, I was not

equipped to make prognostications about the end of the world in 2020. I had as many questions as anyone else did.

But as I listened to his concerns, I answered, I hope clearly. I think I did, because I always would take the conversation to the hope, the faith that I have, because it's resting in Jesus. Jesus is my peace in turbulent times. Alan talked about that when he talked about what? Jesus.

When Jesus appeared to John on the Lord's day, what did Jesus say? John, the world is a crazy place right now, but I've overcome the world. So dial it back, calm yourself down. So I listened and I asked some questions, but I had to really listen to understand what kind of questions were out there. Being listened to, Paul, Claudia Mitchell says, is so closely associated with being loved.

Listen to this. Being listened to is so closely associated with being loved that most people don't know the difference. Let me say that again. Being listened to, really listened to, is so closely associated with being loved that most people don't know the difference. When you're listening to people, well, they feel loved.

And when you're listening to them, well, you are loving them. Well, I don't think I could tell the difference if someone's really listening to me. The key to good listening is asking some good questions. Jesus was a master at asking questions and listening well. Someone did the count.

I've not done the count, so don't quote me on this, but someone did the count that Jesus asked 307 questions. He was asked 183 questions. He directly answered how many? Three questions. He directly answered only three questions.

The three questions are this. And I don't even feel like these are super direct. When Pilate says, are you the king? Jesus responds in John 18, Yes, I am the king, and I was born for this role right here. So he answers Pilate sort of directly.

The disciples, when they said, will you teach us to pray? Jesus says, okay, I'll teach you to pray, sort of. He does answer their question with some teaching. And he teaches them the Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. You know the Lord's Prayer.

The third one is this. When the Pharisees say, so what is the greatest commandment? And Jesus responds, you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. Those are the three questions that Jesus seems to answer directly. One question, Jesus says, I don't know.

Does that surprise you that Jesus didn't know the answer to a

question? Anyone know what the question was? The question was this. The disciples go to Jesus, say, so when's it all ending? When's the end of the world?

They had the same questions my friend did. Jesus says, I don't know. I don't know. Says, only the Father knows and he's not told me yet. I don't know.

Jesus asked good questions, he listened to good questions, but he never felt the need to answer all the questions. And some of us feel that sometimes, don't we, like, we gotta have all the answers before we try to share our faith with anyone. But if we can approach it with a little bit of the attitude of Jesus, like, I don't know, we actually build trust. We create space for meaningful spiritual dialogue. When we come at it with, we've got all the answers, shut up and let me tell you what I know.

You do not build trust. You do not build an environment where real spiritual conversations can take place. It's hard sometimes not to just jump in with all you know. But this is important that we take the approach of Jesus. Say, you know what?

I'm not sure about that. Great question. But when we truly listen, when we listen to someone's story without an agenda, without judgment, without rushing in to try to give them all the answers, this is how we show we care them, care for them. So we pray for them, we listen really, really well. And this is my favorite one.

This is my favorite one right here. We eat together. Yeah. Yeah. Eating together is a big deal.

The best place to hear someone's story I found is over a meal. When I share a meal with someone, particularly one that I don't have to fix. Hint. That's great. I'm relaxed.

I'm ready to share my story. I'm ready to hear someone else's story. Over the course of that period where he was trying to figure out what it looked like to love and follow Jesus, he and I shared lots of meals, lots of cups of coffee and iced tea in that we looked a lot like Jesus. Because Jesus uses meals to help others experience God's grace. In Luke 5 there's a story of Jesus eating with disreputable sinners.

One of the stories that I love about this is the story of Zacchaeus. Remember Zacchaeus, who was a wee little man? Jesus invited himself to lunch with Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was far from God, but Jesus says, I want to have lunch with you, Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus had a pretty bad reputation.

But inviting himself to a meal with Zacchaeus, Jesus sent a very, very

clear message. No one is too far for God's grace to reach them. That's one meal Jesus shared. Another one is it was a big. He had a banquet.

5,000 people showed up. And this is a meal that Jesus sort of had a hand in preparing, but he stayed calm and cool through it, didn't break a sweat. 5,000 people, they're hungry. It's been a long day. Their stomachs have been growling for a long time.

Jesus is teaching, and the roar of Tim's stomach is distracting him from his message. But in providing a meal for 5,000 people, Jesus made it really clear that he knew Tim was hungry. He knew that although you may be among thousands, God cares about you and your physical needs. That's what a meal is, after all. And then there's Luke 11, where he calls Martha from her very important work, Carla.

Washing dishes in the kitchen. And he says, martha, I want you to slow down. I want you to come in here. I want you to sit down, put your feet up. I want you to rest.

You're a little overextended right now. You're a little anxious. I know what you're doing. You're masking some frustration. Don't do it.

Come in. Just relax. And in that, he teaches us that if we are weary and heavy burdened, Jesus has a place for us. He ate with the uptight and the upright. I like that line, too.

Did anyone else chuckle? Yeah, I like that line. You can quote me on that. I think I made that up literally on my own. Jesus ate with the uptight and the upright, which there's a bunch of us in this room right here.

He shared meals with the Pharisees. Over one of those meals, as he's hanging out with people who are super religious, his feet are washed by the tears of someone who was not invited to be there. And Jesus got to demonstrate compassion in what true righteousness looked like. Jesus used meals as a way to connect with people, and we can do the same. A meal is one of the easiest ways to build relationships and open the door for deeper conversations.

Now, again, I don't want to. I don't like to cook. We feed people a lot, and I'm tired of it. But a restaurant's a great place to meet someone, go eat, go out to eat with them. One of the things that we do at our house, that we try to make this a daily thing, is we talk about roses and thorns.

Roses and thorns are those things. If you ask the boys, they'll tell you a rose is something that happened during the day that was good, that was positive. This was a great thing. If it happened again tomorrow, we would be happy about it. A thorn is one of those things that was not so good, and we hope it doesn't happen again the next

day.

But every day and around the dinner table or on the front porch, something we share this conversation. What was a rose? What was a thorn? So as we learn about what matters to each other, how we can care and support each other, those questions, questions like that, help us build moments of connection and build trust. You can have that over a restaurant meal as well as a cup of coffee on your porch.

Who do you need to invite to lunch today? Now, if you get invited by me to lunch today, it's not because I feel like you're far from God and need my help. I could just be wanting someone to eat lunch with. But if you have someone in your life who is far from God, maybe you need to take him to lunch and start to build. Build trust with them, develop a relationship with them.

This could be the person God's put in your life. As we come to a point of communion, I also think of the most important meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. These are friends that he had shared his life with for three years. And at that meal, Jesus held up bread and he held up wine. Now, these were pretty symbolic elements even in Jesus time.

Since the earliest times, bread has symbolized life. And that's why Jesus calls himself the bread of life. But here, in this meal, he takes that bread and he breaks it. And it becomes an image of his willingness to sacrifice himself for the people he loves. And then he has this cup.

And from the beginning of time, again, wine has had deep, deep significance in the cultures, that that's been their primary drink. It's been a sign of blessing, it's been a sign of goodness, but it's also been a picture of blood. And this is the image that comes to mind with us, isn't it? But now, in this moment, Jesus uses this cup to draw attention to the life that we can have. With him.

He calls it a cup of covenant. Says, this is a. This is a relational thing that's going to go on. When you drink this cup, you're saying yes to a covenant relationship with me and this meal. If you're not a believer here this morning, this meal is a beautiful picture of what it means to live a life in Christ.

If you are a believer here this morning, we invite you to share in this meal, whether you're part of our church or part of another church. This is a meal that we share together as believers where we get to remind ourselves of this beautiful thing that we've been invited into, this beautiful life that we have have in Christ. And it also is a beautiful evangelistic picture for others to look and see about the goodness and the blessing that awaits for them when they say yes to Jesus. Listen, there are people in our lives that God has put

there for a reason. We don't need to be afraid of sharing our faith with them, but we start with prayer.

We begin by praying for them. And if we're praying for them, God's going to open a door of opportunity to talk to them. But when we talk to them, listen more than you talk, listen more than you talk. And then share a meal with them. Break some bread with them.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the way that you came into our world. You so loved us, you had developed a relationship with us. You began caring about us long before we knew to care about you. And you so loved us that you came in obedience to the Father. You came, you surrendered your life.

You gave it, you broke bread and took wine. And in your life you embodied this beautiful picture that we're going to take part of here in just a moment. Father, you didn't answer all our questions, but in following you in walking with you, those questions begin to make sense and even get answered. So, Jesus this morning, if there's anyone here who does not know you, I pray this will be the day. They say, I'm ready to trust Jesus.

For those of us who do who walk with you, I pray today would be the day where we once again remind ourselves that you love us. You love us in this moment. Meet us in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel. Visit [YouTube.com sherwoodoaks](https://www.youtube.com/sherwoodoaks) to watch messages, series and complete worship services.