

Ripple Effect

Week 3: Tell Your Story, Point to His

1 Peter 3:13-15

Camp Illiana Story

That's my story, what's yours? All of us have a story of what God has done, or is doing, in our lives. How He is pursuing us with His love and grace. How He comforted us in a difficult time of life, met us in the pit when we hit rock bottom. How He's been faithful to you as you grew up in church and followed Him.

My conviction is that **If Jesus is shaping your life, then you have a story to tell.** And your story is one of the most powerful tools God can use to bring others to Him.

We're wrapping up our series on relational evangelism today that we've called the Ripple Effect. We've seen over the last couple of weeks that we are at the center of God's plan to tell others about Jesus. To help people find what we've found and follow Him. I said in week 1 that **The ripple effect of God's Kingdom starts with you.** You are the pebble God is casting into your home, apartment complex, dorm, neighborhood. He wants to use you to reach people for Christ where you live, work, and play.

When we think about these places, I imagine all of us have someone in our life who is close to us, but far from God. A neighbor, a friend, a co-worker. God wants to use you in that person's life to help them find and follow Jesus. To be His witness, which is what Jesus sent us out to do. And being a **Witness simply means sharing the story of what Jesus has done and is doing in you.**

What Jesus has done by coming into this world. God taking on flesh, experiencing what it means to be human, the joys and the pains. Living a perfect life, dying a sinners death that we deserved, and rising from the dead giving us the hope of new life. That's what Jesus has done for all of us, but if you're a follower of Jesus and you've surrendered your life to Him, then he's doing something in you, too. And if Jesus is shaping your life, in any way, big or small, then you have a story to tell.

But I think often times we minimize our story. Or we think, "I can't share it with others." We want to leave the task of evangelism up to others, even though Jesus gave it to all of his followers. We think that evangelism is just best left to the "professionals," the theologians, the extroverts. God wants the ripple effect of His Kingdom to start with us, but too often we're like, "Yeah, God, can you just start it with someone else?"

And I think there are a lot of reasons why we want to hand off the task of evangelism, but from my experience and conversations I've had with people over the years, the biggest reason we don't practice evangelism is because of the picture we have in our minds about what it is.

A few years ago, there was a meme that became popular. People would put the job they do at the top and then have a series of pictures that showed, “What my parents think I do,” “What society thinks I do,” “What I think I do,” “What I actually do.” So, I put one together for Evangelism, because when we think about the stereotypes of evangelism, it’s no wonder most of us don’t want to do it. (Walk through images 1-3 with me.)

None of these are what Jesus had in mind when he sent us out to be his witnesses. I think what Jesus envisioned, and what the New Testament authors wrote about, looks less like this, and more like this...(Image 4, leave up until next slide.)

Evangelism isn’t about awkwardly going door to door or trying to force Jesus into every conversation. It’s not a street preacher with a bullhorn shouting at people. And it’s certainly not whatever this is! More often than not, evangelism is about walking with people we love, praying with them and for them. Listening to their story, sharing a meal or cup of coffee with them. Serving them the way Jesus served us. And being ready, when the time is right, to tell your story and point to His.

We overcomplicate it in our minds, but the truth is, an evangelist is simply A neighbor who notices and cares about the people around them. A friend who prays for God to open doors and hearts. A listener who asks questions and doesn’t interrupt. A guest at the table who knows walls come down when food is shared! A servant willing to help mow the yard or move a couch or watch the kids in a pinch.

Any one of us can do these things, which means, An evangelist is YOU! And it can be as simple as sharing your story and pointing to God’s.

We’ve been using the acronym B.L.E.S.S. for this series (go over B.L.E.S.S Image). This is a simple way for us to bless our friends and neighbors and co-workers who don’t know Jesus. To be a spiritual influencer in their life. (Cards available) And today, we’re rounding out the series by looking at this last letter...Share your story.

I think the Apostle Peter gives us some insight into how we can do this. Look at our text with me. 1 Peter 3:13-15...(READ).

Peter is writing to a group of Christians under pressure and persecution because of their faith. If anyone had a reason to be silent, it was them. They could literally lose everything by following Jesus, even their life. And that risk was even greater if they were caught trying to help someone else find and follow Jesus, too. There were real risks and fears about sharing Jesus.

And we have our own risks and fears still today. A couple of weeks ago, we did a little relational evangelism survey to see where we are on this topic. We had about 900 people take it and we found that 2/3rds of us are intentionally praying for someone in our life who is

close to us, but far from God. They're close to us, but disconnected from Jesus. We also found that only about 40% of us have actually had a spiritual conversation with that person in our life.

The last question was about the obstacles and fears we have about this. Here's what we found...(show Survey image) Honestly, I've experienced every single one of these. I checked a couple of these boxes when I took the survey, too. There are real fears and concerns when it comes to sharing our faith. We have them and the first followers of Jesus that Peter is writing to had them. And he tells them, and us, "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened."

And then he writes something that's pretty convicting to me. He says, "In your hearts, revere Christ as Lord." Honor Jesus above all things. Love Jesus more than your fear of men. It's as if Peter is saying to us, if our fear keeps us silent, keeps us from sharing our faith with others, then we have effectively put those we're afraid of on the throne of our heart and taken Christ off of it.

He's challenging us to be bold, but notice Peter doesn't tell them to just go out with a bullhorn and start arguing or preaching on the street corner. He doesn't tell them they have to go door to door. He just says, "Be ready." In one of the clunkiest sentences in Scripture, Peter writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

In other words, always be ready to tell people why you have hope, even when life is hard. When people see your life and wonder why you're not falling apart, be ready to tell them about Jesus. When someone asks why you have joy in the midst of what you're going through, be ready to talk about your faith. When someone notices your integrity and the good you do, be ready to talk about the difference Jesus makes in your everyday life.

Our role in evangelism is not to convert people. Our role is to be a witness. To be ready to tell others about what Jesus has done for this world and is doing in us. Why we have the hope and the joy and the peace we do. If Jesus is shaping your life, then you have a story to tell. (SOCC Stories – 6 episodes, drop on Wednesdays. Claire Roth/Kelley Dawson)

As you walk with people in your life who are close to us, but far from God, people you love and care for, you will have the opportunity to share your story. To be a witness of what Jesus has done in this world and is doing in you. The difference he's making in your life. The question is, When the opportunity comes, will you be ready? When the question is asked or the moment is right, will you be ready to share why you follow Jesus?

As we close, I want to share how I take these opportunities when they come my way. You've heard me say it already, but I share my story and point to His. You don't need a dramatic testimony to have a meaningful story. If Jesus is shaping your life, then you have a story worth sharing.

And here's why your story is so powerful...it brings the Gospel to life. People can argue with theology, but they can't argue with transformation that they see lived out right in front of them. Sharing your story connects the transformation they see back to God's grace that is shaping you, and it gives you the opportunity to invite them to experience that same grace, too.

So, real quickly...how can you **share your story**? 3 easy parts:

- 1) **Before Jesus** – What was life like? What were you searching for/felt missing?
- 2) **Meeting Jesus** – What opened your heart? What changed? Who helped you?
- 3) **Living with Jesus** – How have you experienced hope, grace, purpose now? (Note: If, “I now go to church on Sundays!” is the only difference in your story, friend, God wants to write a better story in your life!)

That's a quick way we can share our story. I have a 30 second version of this and a 30 minute version. It's your story. Just be familiar with it and ready to share it. And then, be ready to **Point to His**. One way I like to tell God's story is through the **3 Circle Gospel presentation**.

If you've been around, you've probably heard me share it. We actually had a group of creative people make a video of it. If you're wondering what God's story is or how you can share it, check out this video...**(3 Circle Gospel Video)**

Easter Week – Great opportunity to share your story and point to His. Who in your life needs hope? Who might come if you invite them? I invited a friend of mine last week that I've been praying for and building a relationship with. When he said he'd be there it was one of the best moments of my week...and it was a REALLY good week!

Ways to connect:

- 1) **Journey to the Cross** - Audio experience designed to help you slow down, reflect, and prepare your heart for the resurrection of Jesus and hope of Easter. Find it on our podcast channel anywhere you get Podcasts.
- 2) **Good Friday Service @ 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall**
- 3) **Easter Sunday!** Three identical services. Consider joining us for the 8am!

Lots going on, but it starts with today, Palm Sunday. The day we remember Jesus humbly riding into Jerusalem, not to seek a throne and a crown, but to seek and save us.

Invitation

I've talked a lot today about sharing the hope we've found in Jesus, but maybe you're here today and you've never experienced that hope we're talking about. You hear words like peace and joy and forgiveness and you want to experience more of that in your life.

Jesus didn't ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to start a new religion, He came on a rescue mission. He lived the life we couldn't live and died the death we deserved. And next Sunday, on Easter, we'll celebrate the resurrection because it is what gives us the hope we have today.

Jesus did all of this because he loves you. And if you're ready to receive that love, to receive a new life and fresh start in Christ, we want to help you take your next steps.

Communion

For those of us who have said yes to Jesus, we now come to a time of communion where we remember that his body that was broken and blood that was shed is the foundation of our story we get to share with others.

Communion isn't just about remembering what Jesus did, it's a time to recommit to what He's doing, and wants to do, through us. So, as we take the bread and drink the cup today, let's thank Him for what He's done and ask for the boldness to share it with others.