



DISCIPLE

With Jesus | In Community | On Mission

SERMON TITLE: On Mission: How to Gospel

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SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2:5-11

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The earliest followers of Jesus didn't call themselves Christians. They didn't think of themselves as members of a religion. They considered themselves disciples – students and apprentices of Rabbi Jesus. So if this is who we're supposed to be, how do we begin to define 'disciple'? Is being a disciple about knowing certain things? Doing certain things? Saying, believing, or rejecting certain things? If so, what? Is there a manual for this? How long does it take? And what's the point of it all? Or simply, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

When we talk about being disciples, we're talking about what it looks like to holistically act on the gospel, that discipleship is a whole-life response to the good news of Jesus. And it's a whole-life response because Jesus gave his whole-life so that we would be made new. The gospel of Jesus as Lord is the Magna Carta of discipleship. It's the constitution of disciple-making. And just like the word *disciple*, in the New Testament, the word *gospel* can be both a noun and a verb. In English, we don't use it as a verb. We say things like preach the gospel, live the gospel, or share the gospel. But in the New Testament, sometimes you just *gospel* people. And so how should we think about this since it doesn't fit nicely into English? How does it work as a verb? How do you *gospel* somebody? Learning to do this, to do gospel as a verb, is the mission leg of the stool, and the mission corner of the triangle. But there's more...

The good news of Jesus always meets people where they are, and always seeks to bring salvation, healing, and restoration there. So, how you *gospel* someone who is considering divorce will be slightly different than how you *gospel* someone battling depression and different than *gospel*ing your kids. The point is that learning to *gospel* people includes both the solid core of who Jesus is and what he has done AND includes the different ways that Jesus wants to engage people with grace and truth right where they are. So, this widens our question. Yes, how do you *gospel* at all? But then we have to ask, how do you *gospel* differently in different contexts? This is the disciple's task.

In Philippians 2, Paul tackles both of these questions. And for the sake of clarity, let's think about five actions in how Jesus *gospel*ed us, and that will show us how to *gospel* others. After all, the gospel is Jesus' mission. He has, is, and will continue to *gospel* others, and his mission becomes ours as we learn to partner with him. This is the disciple becoming like the Rabbi in Matthew 10.

Here are the five steps of how to *gospel* from Philippians 2:

1. Recognition of gospel need. Broadly, Jesus came to deal with the problems of sin and death, that we need to be restored to our Creator. And more specifically, in Philippians 2:5, Paul is telling his friends that they need to adopt a certain kind of Christ-like thinking. Either way, both problems are gospel needs. So, what did Jesus do about it?
2. Movement towards the need. Even though Jesus was and is the very essence of God himself, and even though he shared all of the glories and joys and bliss of heaven with the Father, because he recognized the need, he moved towards it. Jesus' movement from heaven to earth was a sanctified stooping. Jesus wasn't scared to get his hands dirty with the filth of our sin. He didn't wait for the need to go away or handle itself. And if anybody ever had an excuse to not move towards need, it was God-in-the-flesh, and he didn't. Jesus made our problem his problem, and that's what Paul is talking about in 2:6-7.

3. **Understanding from the need's perspective.** You can recognize a need and move towards the need, but then when you get there, you can talk to the need about its problem in ways that it doesn't understand. But this is not what Jesus did. He emptied himself, and "took the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of humanity." Meaning, he came to share fully in our experience. He felt all the weight of life that we face, and he didn't cave under the pressure. He gets it, and not from a distance. He came to address our problems not just among us, but AS one of us. Jesus' mission – his *gospeling* us – is all gritty, feet-on-the-ground grace.
4. **Sacrificial service of the need.** All of this humility we see in Jesus leads to his ultimate act of humility in verse 8, "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus doesn't just move towards us and wait around beside us in an understanding way for us to get our act together. He does what has to be done *for us* because we can't do it ourselves. He stands in our place, as our representative. He goes to the cross to die the death that should be ours, to experience a kind of unholy separation that we deserve. He sacrifices himself in service of our need. And this leads to...
5. **Glory to the God of the gospel.** Because of the action of Jesus to come from heaven to earth, to sacrificially give himself for sinners, and to make kingdom come – this all shines the brightest spotlight possible on God's worth, glory, and importance. God is to be esteemed and enjoyed *in all* and *above all* because of what Jesus has done. This is the bullseye of discipleship, to live in such a way that we imitate Jesus in the power of the Spirit to draw attention to God's infinite glory and value.

So, if this is how to *gospel*, what does it look like to *gospel* differently in different contexts? How do we follow the movement of these five steps as we seek to *good news* in all the distinct spaces of life?

Consider marriage. What are the needs in your marriage? In what ways are you avoiding and not moving towards those needs? And if you are moving towards the mess, do you come with just your understanding of how things should be? Or are you willing to listen, and understand from your spouse's perspective? And beyond this, is there any willingness in your life to die to self, think of the other as more important than yourself, and sacrificially serve them? When these things happen, God is honored and glorified in Christian marriages.

Or what about personal evangelism? Think about someone you know who doesn't know God. Their greatest need is to have a relationship with Jesus. And you're not afraid of moving towards the mess, but you're still struggling to understand things from their perspective. How have they been hurt? Who has wronged them? How does their life have hope or hopelessness? And then how do you sacrificially point them to the sacrifice of Jesus that can save and heal them?

This is how we speak the language of mission, by learning how Jesus *gospelled* us so that we can *gospel* others. And the first part of the equation has to be beautiful to us. If we presume on his grace and mercy, if we presume on his love and forgiveness, the summons to be on mission with him will never be seen as glorious. Jesus *gospeling* us and us rehearsing that to ourselves is fuel for us *gospeling* others. If the first part of that isn't sweet and liberating and awesome to us, then we'll never accidentally find ourselves enjoying life on mission with him. You WILL talk about what you love, and the more we can get in the way of God's love in the good news of Jesus, the more we will learn to speak *gospel* to others.

Discussion Starters

- What part of Jesus *gospeling* us in Philippians 2 stands out to you the most?
- How did Paul *gospel* his friends in Philippians 2.1-4?
- Who is someone you know who does these things naturally to and for others?
- What is your favorite part of this passage/message?

- How is it hard for you to gospel your own heart?
- When are you most in denial of your own need?
- Who is someone in your life right now that you feel called to *gospel* more directly and humbly?
- What is your biggest fear about being an on-mission disciple?