

Share

Week 3

Welcome ... Today is what is known as **Palm Sunday!** [Explain Palm Sunday] – Just know that the crowd had it all wrong ...

Maybe that's how we came to Christ one time? All excited and full of energy. So excited that we just had to tell someone? ... or had to SHARE with someone? Then life happened, and slowed our excitement or religion happened and tamed that passion we once had.

We are excited about our services for this next week **... A Good Friday service** on Friday ... then our Easter Celebration services next weekend.

But I am also excited about today's service. As this is the WEEK of the cross ... I am hoping that we as a church come to a crossroad. A point where we choose Jesus over everything else.

Because you just can't half way choose the cross. The cross was God showing mankind that He was **ALL IN**. And the only response we can give back to God is to say, "God I am ALL IN with you."

God wants you to connect with HIS story so deeply ... that His story becomes YOUR story. What He has done for us ... what He has given us ... is so big, so awesome, so cool ... that we should be willing to constantly evaluate our lives, to see if WE are where He wants us to be. He wants us to get it right!

Just last week I read a scary news post on **Yahoo news**. It said that those who sit at desks for large chunks of time are 50% more likely to have heart attacks. That was new news to me. But guess who sets at a desk for long periods of time? I do!

Guess what I did the very next day? I went and found a desk that I can stand at. And since then, I have tried to stand for at least half of my desk time. Why did I change ... because of what the new information told. It could be life changing, life GIVING information.

And that is what I have been hoping to **SHARE** with you in this series. My hope, my dream, MY PRAYER is that this series will be life changing for us!

Here has been the gist of the story so far. As we head toward Easter ... the cross and the resurrection ... the climatic moment in God's interaction with man.

I have asked you to **look around YOUR life**, and I didn't even say look that hard ... I asked you to look within your circle of influence and IDENTIFY those that are far from God.

They are already a part of your life ... and you probably already have a small bit of influence in their life, maybe not spiritually yet ... but you can see that they are not connected with God, not walking WITH God.

And then our next step is to **begin to pray** for this person or persons ... EVERYDAY! And a part of those prayers is us asking God to give us opportunities, WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, to **SHARE** what He is doing in our life.

We're not going to cram it down their throats; we're not going to literally kidnap them, tie them up and bring them to church ... no we are praying that God will just open a door where I can share naturally.

Then we are going to walk through that door boldly and courageously.

I hope that you are into this! Because what we have to share is life changing information.

Last week we talked about INVESTING in those relationships. In a no-strings attached way.

This week I want to focus on SHARING. Sharing what God has done in YOUR life ... and sharing God's story with the ones that we have been praying for.

If you have your Bible I want us to return to John chapter 4. This is where we have been for the last few weeks.

We have been looking at the story of the "Woman at the Well."

Jesus has met this woman. She is at the well. She is in Samaria. This woman is an individual who has been through a lot in her life. We learned that she has already been married and divorced 5 different times, and the guys she is living with now is someone she is not married to. In her small town, she probably has a bad reputation ... she definitely would not be considered the model citizen who has it all together.

She is at the well getting water. Jesus is there. His disciples are off getting food.

And Jesus basically IDENTIFIES this woman. He could have met with anyone in the town ... but he chose to meet with this hurting woman.

They are the only 2 there, and Jesus begins to INVEST in her life. So Jesus identified, He invested, and then over time ... He SHARES with her. He said, "I am the Messiah that you have been waiting for."

And she is listening to all of this, processing it ... and she is blown away by it.

So here is what we see. Let's go a little further into the story.

John 4:27

The disciples come back and say, "Why is Jesus talking to a (whisper) WOMAN? Wow!"

And, "She's a Samaritan woman! Double wow!"

And they can probably tell by looking at her, that she's got a risqué story to tell.

These are the things the disciples are saying to one another, but NONE of them have the guts to ask Jesus.

So ... they are watching all of this go down ... and this is something I love about Jesus ... He's always making us think.

See, Jesus didn't only see a woman who had been married and divorced 5 times. He didn't only see a woman of a different race. He saw beyond all of her STUFF,

and He saw a child of God, a child that God loves ... He saw her in her situation, and He decided to walk up and express His hope for the world to her.

Look at this ... **John 4:28-29**

This is so good! So she is so excited, so fired up. Jesus has shared with her.

She went to get water, she had walked all the way out there, she takes her water jug and sits it down, forgets about it! And runs (When was the last time you really **ran?** Ran because the need was there? Last year propane tank!)

This woman has NEW information, important information and she runs back to the village to tell everyone about Jesus and what He had said to her.

Basically she is SHARING her story with the people of her town.

Here's the deal ... when God moves in your life, it is too good to keep to yourself.

So she forgets about the water ... and runs back to the village. She WANTS to share her story.

Then look at this ... **John 4:30** ... The people came out to see Jesus.

I want to suggest to you today ... that God wants to use you and your story to help other people come (run) to a place where they Jesus clearly.

YOU! Not just ministers, not just authors or famous Christians ... God wants to use everyday people.

You may think, "I don't have it all worked out in my life, God can't really use me."

LOOK what He just did with this woman! C'mon.

You say, "I don't know ... I still have issues that I am working on ... I'm afraid if I am really open and honest ... that I may change the dynamic of the relationship."

Listen, if you really experience God and His grace ... you have nothing to fear here. You can just allow God to move through your heart and your life in a

natural way ... with people you love and care about. HE will do this! He wants to use you to impact lives.

So let's break it down. I want to talk to you first about sharing YOUR story.

Some of you may say, "Well my story isn't dramatic ... some of you may say I GREW UP in the church, and I have always been part of a church community, it feels like I have always believed in Jesus. I don't feel like I HAVE a story.

Let me just say, in today's world ... if that's your story it is remarkable. Today it seems the wild and crazy stories are more the norm. YOU have had a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ ... THAT is truly remarkable. And YOUR story will impact people in the way that others will not. Why? Because it's your story.

And as you share it naturally, it's doesn't have to be action packed to have power. You just trust that God is going to use His and your story to impact someone else.

Now some OF you ... have lived crazy lives. Great! Tell YOUR story and tell it honestly and authentically ... don't exaggerate it, don't sugarcoat it ... just tell your story and let God work in it.

Every single one of YOU has a story!

1 Peter 3:15-16 – *If someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.*

If I came up to you today and asked, "Tell me why you are a Christian?" What would you say? "Give me a reason for the hope that you have?" What would you say?

Some of you may say, "Just come to church with me and check it out yourself."

I want to push you a little bit ... go further than that. Be able to explain why you have hope in Jesus.

Look at the last sentence ... "But do this in a gentle and respectful way."

You don't have to have the strategy of one guy I heard of ... He would go to crowded movie openings and sit by himself. Eventually someone is going to ask him ... is that seat SAVED. (Ah he's a little trickster) And then HE would ask, no this seat is not saved, but the real question is ... are you saved?

C'mon ... that's the best we got?

Or a new strategy that I heard about ... people are walking up to people on crowded streets or in malls and holding their hand like a gun ... they walk up to people and hold their hand to peoples head and go "Bang, you're dead, heaven or hell?"

NO! That's only going to upset people.

The world is screaming at us as Christians ... they are saying cut out the junk methods ... just share naturally.

So we pray for the RIGHT time ... and when the time comes we share naturally. This is the MOST effective way.

YOUR story is powerful. Because it's connected to God's story.

I want to suggest a way to tell your story. You can break it down into 3 parts.

a. **My life before Christ**

What was your life like before Christ?

The second part ...

b. **How I became a Christian**

Did a friend share his faith with you? Did a certain message MOVE you? Did you pick up a Bible, have your heart rearranged because of the story it told?

Then the 3rd part is this ...

c. **What difference has Christ made in your life?**

So what's happened to you since you chose to become a Christian. And you don't need to fake it, or add any extra drama to it ... just simply tell YOUR story honestly.

Are you ready to tell your story? The Bible tells us to be ready.

Let's just say, if we really believe that our God is as loving as we make Him out to be, then a day will come when the people that we have been praying for will turn to us and say, "Tell me what would you do?" "Talk to me about your faith" "Tell me how you got into this whole God thing" Those are open doors to share our stories. No preaching necessary ... just sharing.

You need to get ready. If you are praying for people on a regular basis, you need to assume that one day they are going to open the door.

It's really helpful to think our answer through ahead of time. What was my life like before I became a Christian, How did I become a Christian, and How has my life been changed because of Christ.

Those words are going to be so powerful in someone's life. So, put some thought process into them.

At some time in their future ... they are going to want to hear honestly from a friend, what God has done in their life.

AND THEN share God's Story.

Because there's our story ... and we start there, but there's more.

The woman at the well ... she's encountered Jesus, and now she is ready to share.

Look at what happens ...

John 4:39

She shares HER story ... that gets them there – now look at what happens

John 4:40-42 - *When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days,⁴¹ long enough for many more to hear his message and believe.⁴² Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."*

She started with HER story ... and the goal was the others could come and experience God personally.

And God begins to move; now they don't believe simply because SHE shared; now they believe because they have now experienced Christ personally.

So our goal is to share OUR story ... and share God's story.

When it comes to sharing God's story ... let's keep it simple. There is one sentence in the Bible that breaks it down really well ...

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It's a great place to go ... when someone wants to know the point of being a Christian.

There is a first half to this verse ... and there is a second half. The first half says, "The wages or the payment is death." In other words, when you work, you do certain things; you get paid for that (wages). Sin in the Bible means to miss God's mark. The Bible says that "All of us have sinned, we have ALL missed God's mark."

And most people are aware of things that they have done to hurt people. Lies we have said, words used to cause pain. The Bible sort of defines that as sin, as missing God's mark. So the WAGES of sin is death.

Now, let's focus on the 2nd half of this verse. "But the free gift of God is eternal life."

We deserve death, we should have death ... BUT we have eternal life THROUGH Christ Jesus our Lord.

THAT is the gospel!

If someone ever asks in any way why they should be a Christian ... you can answer with this verse.

You are going to have the opportunity to share your story. And if you do, more than likely they are going to want to know more. That's when you bring in God's story. And at the end of that you are going to want to go call Tim and tell him what's going on, so he can come in and seal the deal, right?

Let me encourage you ... if you are there ... God wants to use you.

Maybe you in your casual friendship conversation, you just simply ask, "Would you like to become a follower of Jesus?"

You simply share how they are to express their faith in Jesus Christ.

They have already heard, so step one is done. Are they ready to repent (turn) from sin? Are they ready to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior? You could help them do those things. Are they ready to be baptized and connect to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? For the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit?

I hope that you get to do it all. Because it lights a fire in you that you will never forget.

So you share YOUR story and you share God's story.

As you share ... let me give you a couple of reminders

- a. **Be prayed up.**
- b. **Don't give speeches** – let it be natural. Don't talk AT people, talk with people.
- c. **Give it in doses.** Don't give too much too soon. Don't open your Bible to Genesis 1:1 and work your way to Revelation on the first day.
- d. **And lastly, BE BOLD.** When God opens the door, walk through it and share.

People want to listen to somebody who actually believes what they are talking about. If you believe, if you care ... SHARE!

I understand that there are appropriate and inappropriate places to share. I also believe that God is BIG enough to put us in the appropriate places.

And when the time is right, BE BOLD about sharing what God has done for you.

Notice the woman at the well ... she ran back into town and shared her encounter with Jesus. And for those of you who may be scared to death about sharing, or you may struggle with extreme shyness ... notice what else she did.

She brought them to where she met Jesus.

Maybe you latch on to that as part of your strategy. Bring'em to church with you. Let them hear what you are hearing ... share a ride ... and on the way home discuss what happened in the service.

Easter is next week ... it's the #1 best time of the year to invite someone to church. Use our tools, and invite this week.