

COME FOLLOW ME



Quiet Time and Devotional Series

Inner Action Ministries
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Come Follow Me

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Intentional - Day 1

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

English Author Lewis Carroll, whose most beloved work is "Alice in Wonderland," once famously said that "if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." That saying has become so well known over the years because it's true. It is equally true that you can't have a destination in mind but then take any old road and expect to arrive at your desired end. Life simply doesn't work that way.

We all want to see great things happen in God's church, and to be part of that, and to be used by God. But far too many of us then sit back and don't really take the steps necessary to arrive at that goal. As another famous saying recounts, "we have got to give God something to bless." That's what this quiet time series is about. It's about refocusing our hearts and minds on being fishers of men so that there is a tangible obedience in our lives that God can bless. God wants us to be successful evangelistically, we just need to give him the opportunity.

- If someone were to ask you to write down your long-term and short-term evangelistic plans in your neighborhood, at your job, or in your life in general could you do it? Do you have an evangelistic plan or routine in which you engage?
- Do you pray regularly that God would give you a real passion and heart for the lost?
- Do you regularly share your faith? If not, why not?

Jesus definitely called his people to be evangelistic, to share and proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God. What many of us may not realize is that there are at least three types of evangelism. The first is what we will call "intentional evangelism" or sometimes "cold contact evangelism." This is when Christians go outside of their regular relationships and go out into the public arena whether it be a mall, a shopping center, their school, neighborhood, etc.

The second type is "lifestyle evangelism." This is when unbelievers hear the gospel through the natural relationships and everyday interactions that they have with disciples.

The third type is through “body evangelism.” This is when unbelievers come in contact with the gospel and its effects through some type of contact with the body of Christ. This might come through worship gatherings, fun church family events, neighborhood Bible studies, etc.

- Read John 1:40-51
 - What type of evangelism do we see taking place here?
- Read Luke 9:1-6
 - What type of evangelism do we see taking place here?
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:25
 - What type of evangelism do we see taking place here?
- Which of these methods of evangelism is the most valid biblically (Hint: that’s a trick question)?
- Which one is the easiest for you? Why do you think that is?
- Which one is the most difficult for you? Why do you think that is?

Although all of these techniques are biblically valid, which one do you think you have the most opportunity in which to engage? For most of us, lifestyle evangelism will afford the most and the most consistent opportunities to share your faith. It is this type on which the rest of this quiet time series will focus and we will do so by focusing on several stories from the book of Acts.

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Luke 9:26 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Truly Helping Others - Day 2

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

You've probably heard the old saying that if you "give a man to fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish then you feed him for a lifetime." That saying has been repeated by everyone from a dad trying to teach his son a new skill to politicians arguing that people should be put to work rather than being given governmental funds.

Today, we are going to apply that principle in perhaps a new way as we look at an encounter that a poor and lame man had with two disciples of Jesus Christ shortly after his resurrection.

- Read Acts 3:1-5
 - What was this man's apparent problem?
 - Why do you think he didn't go get a job and provide for himself?
 - Without considering the rest of the story, put yourself in Peter and John's shoes in a modern equivalent to this account. What would you do if you ran into a situation like this today? Would you give the man a few dollars? Would you bring him some food? Would you hurry by and tell yourself that you're too busy and there are too many people for you to help anyway?

At first glance, the man's problems seemed to be that he was lame and that he was not able to work for a living, so he had no money. I know when I see someone begging for money, my thoughts usually go to whether or not I can help them financially. But let's look at what Peter and John did and see what we can learn.

- Read Acts 3:6-10
 - Why do you think that Peter did not go out and take up a collection from the other disciples (Acts 2:42-47) to help this man?
 - Why did he offer him nothing more than the name of Jesus Christ and the power that was available to him through that name?
 - What was the response of the man?
 - What was the response of the people?
 - What do you think this man did after this encounter with Peter?

If you're anything like me, the first that jumps into your mind when you read this account, and others like it, is how incredible it is and how amazing God is. The second thing, though, that pops into my mind is the thought that that was great for Peter but I don't have the first-century option that an apostle had to tell the man to get up and walk and to demonstrate to him the power of God to heal our entire lives. So how can this account be relevant to me if I don't have the power of healing?

The reality is that I don't meet too many lame beggars on a daily basis and you probably don't either. But we all run into countless people who have spiritual problems that are every bit as debilitating as the lame legs that this man had. They might have depression problems, job issues, a terrible home life or marriage, or many other things. But like the man's lameness, that is not their real problem is it? Their real problem is the same problem that this man and all humans have. If they are separated from God, then that is their real problem. Peter gave this man a miracle that demonstrated the healing that he needed spiritually. All the man could see was that he needed money, but Peter saw much more than that and helped in a way that permanently helped him.

That's what we can do when we listen to the problems of those around them and gently help them to see that we might not have the right answers to fix their specific problems (or we might, and should definitely do that if we can) but what we do have for sure we can give them: the life and power of Jesus Christ. Are you willing to do that for those around you today?

- Is there anyone around you that you can give what you have and help their real problem: their need for the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Make a list of three or four people that you can pray for every day for the next month. Don't just pray for them, though, do what Peter did. Go and show them the power of the Kingdom of God and what it can do in their lives.

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Luke 19:10 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Bold and Fresh- Day 3

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

I have trouble keeping secrets. Now I'm not talking about someone else's confidential and sensitive information but I'm mostly referring to good news or surprises. I just can't hold in good news. I get too excited about it. In fact, that's what led me to abandon my big, romantic plans for the next day to ask my now-wife to marry me and instead blurted it and thrust a ring in her face at 2 o'clock in the morning in my dorm room after she had just arrived from a twelve-hour drive. She was exhausted and stunned and it ruined the surprise but I just couldn't keep it in any longer. I had to tell her that I wanted to marry her.

I get the feeling that this is how the first disciples felt. Wherever they went they could not contain their excitement to share the good news about the Kingdom of God. I don't think they had to be urged too much to go share their faith because they were spilling the good news everywhere they went. They were bold and were excited about sharing this fresh, new thing that God had done. In fact, they couldn't be stopped. Not even fierce opposition and looming threats would keep them from sharing their faith wherever they went.

➤ Read Acts 4:1-4

- What do you think compelled the disciples like Peter and John to share their faith everywhere they went?
- Do you think they knew that they might run into trouble due to proclaiming Jesus in the Temple itself?
- What rationale might they have used to convince themselves that it would be wiser to avoid the Temple and share their faith somewhere else?
- Are there any areas or spheres of your life in which you are intimidated to share your faith or have created a rationale for why doing so is not a good idea?

When it comes down to it, this was all a matter of power and authority. The high priest and his supporters felt that it was they who had the authority to determine what ideas would be shared and when. In so doing, they unwittingly set themselves up against the authority of God. We certainly don't want to be rash and unnecessarily antagonistic when sharing our faith, but we do need to

make sure that we are not allowing some worldly authority to supersede God's ultimate authority. When the two clash, God should always win. As I said, we don't want to be antagonistic but my suspicion is that we far more often tend to fall on the side of timidity and being too conservative in sharing our faith rather than being bold and obedient to God's authority.

➤ Read Acts 4:5-12

- What other "authorities" might we encounter that would try to keep us from freely sharing the message about the Kingdom?
- Why is verse 12 so important to our motivation for sharing our faith with others?
- Is one of your primary motives in sharing your faith with others a realization that it is the only way that they can be saved?
- Why does knowing this and holding it as a conviction help us overcome obstacles and our own timidity when it comes to sharing our faith with others?

One of the biggest things that can keep us from boldly proclaiming the gospel to others is a lack of confidence and self loathing. We look at all the ways that we fall short and don't feel that we're very good spokespersons for God's Kingdom. Because of that we become easily intimidated. But there was nothing special about Peter and John. They were willing to defy as well as share their faith with the most impressive and educated people of their day. They had courage and conviction. What was their secret?

➤ Read Acts 4:13-22

- What does verse 13 tell us about why these men had such courage?
- We obviously can't walk around with Jesus for three years but where can we learn from him and gain the same sort of courage that they had?
- Do you feel that you have the same courage and conviction that Peter and John had?
- What could God accomplish through you if you had the same courage and conviction that Peter and John had?
- What do you think caused Peter and John to be able to truthfully say that "we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"?
- Is that your same conviction?
- What do you think you can do to get to that level of obedience?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Romans 1:16 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Pray for Strength - Day 4

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

As I sit and type this in my office this morning, I am nice and toasty warm. You see, I have this incredible gas-powered stove that looks like an old pot-bellied stove that keeps my office pleasantly warm in the early mornings while I work. It certainly gives my room a warmth that no other room in the house has. But I have noticed that once I turn the stove off, it cools off in my office rather quickly. I might like for the heat to remain in my room all day but it simply doesn't. It quickly fades away.

As we saw yesterday, the disciples had an incredible boldness and courage that had come from their conviction of their need to be obedient to God. And that conviction had its source in the reality that they had been with Jesus. But Jesus had left and ascended into heaven, so what kept up their courage and conviction? The answer to that question is extremely relevant for us because we can spend time in the morning with God in prayer and his word and get quite fiery and warmed up for the day but as the day goes on, we fade and cool off. So what did they do to keep their fires going, and can we learn from it and emulate it?

➤ Read Acts 4:23-30

- After reporting back to the brothers and sisters what had conspired, what did the believers immediately do for strength?
- Why do you think that they started their prayer by recognizing God's power?
- Why, in verse 28, did they acknowledge that it was God's will that his people would face opposition?
- Why is this an important truth to know before we go out proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom?
- What request do we see in verses 29-30 that was really at the heart of their prayer?
- Do you think that disciples today tend to pray more for boldness, courage, and the power of God to be made known, or do we tend to more often pray for God to remove obstacles, oppositions, and struggles?
- The disciples turned to prayer to keep their fires stoked. Do you turn to prayer constantly throughout the day, especially when you

face tough circumstances or begin to feel that you are “cooling off” a bit?

- How often do you pray for boldness before you share your faith with someone, or for wisdom before making a phone call, or entering a meeting at work? Is prayer really the fuel that keeps your early morning fire from your time with God going?

The secret to the ongoing power, courage, and conviction of the disciples was more than just that they had spent some time with Jesus. They continued to spend time with him through prayer and fellowship with other believers. That is what kept the fires burning. And Jesus kept his promise that he would be with them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

➤ Read Acts 4:31

- What happened after they prayed?
- We may not have exactly the same experience, as far as the building shaking, when we pray but the Spirit will come and empower us just the same.
- How often do you turn to prayer and the strength of the Spirit when you are feeling divided, timid, or just feel that you are “cooling off”?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

The Power of Unity - Day 5

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Yesterday we had a pretty unexpected snowstorm where we live. They were predicting a few inches and instead we got nearly 18 inches. So our family went outside to enjoy the fun. My youngest son and I grabbed some of our snow-brick makers and set about to build a fort. After about an hour we had the wall getting pretty high but realized that it would fall over easily if a strong wind came up. So we set about to put another wall that butted right up against it, creating a double-wall. Just doing that has made the wall incredibly strong and even though we had 45-mile-an-hour winds that night, the wall has stood strong.

There is strength in unity. Most Christians know that and can quickly rattle off a few biblical passages that tell us as much. But how many of us ever stop to think that unity among the family of believers actually is a major factor in the effectiveness of our evangelism. When a group of disciples is living like family, they grow in every way possible, especially numerically. In the middle of the incredible growth of the church and spread of the gospel, Acts takes a small detour to demonstrate the danger of claiming to be part of God's family but really being more committed to yourself rather than the family.

➤ Read Acts 4:32-37

- What passage from Acts 2 does this passage echo?
- What was the result of God's grace being so powerfully at work among the community?
- What message do you think the fact that they had no needy persons among them, that they were living like unified family and caring for one another, sent to the people around them?
- Why did the people sacrifice their own inheritance lands and money to give it to the apostles?
- What did Barnabas choose to do out of the overflow of his heart?
- In what ways do you suppose the brothers and sisters within the church benefited from this type of unity and care for one another?
- Do you think their actions helped their evangelism?
- Are you completely committed to the body in the way that we see in Acts 2 and here?
- If not, what have been the obstacles for you to being that committed, unified, and loyal?

The incredible picture of a community that was sacrificial, loving one another, caring for one another's needs, and completely united in heart and mind is an inspiring one and no doubt was one of the primary ways that the Spirit used the church to have such a large impact on the world around them. But a stern warning comes in the very next passage as we see a couple that acts not for the best interest of the community of believers but for their own self-interest.

➤ Read Acts 5:1-11

- Did Ananias and Sapphira have to sell their property and give all of the money to the apostles?
- Why did they sell it and say that they were giving all of the money, but then held some back?
- What was the result?
- Ananias and Sapphira tried to act like they were part of the family but they weren't truly unified. They were still thinking as individuals rather than being unified as a body.
- What was the result of their disunity?
- What happens to evangelism when a church is dis-unified?
- Do you feel completely unified with your church and with each brother and sister in it?
- Is there anything that the Spirit is showing you that you can grow in or do better in order to increase the unity of the family and allow God to bless that unity in the form of growth?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Psalm 133:1-3 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Suffering Disgrace - Day 6

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

I think every teen goes through a time when they are at least somewhat embarrassed by their parents. I distinctly remembering having to go to public places with my parents during my teenage years and being horrified to think that people might think that I was with them. I have wonderful parents and would be proud to go anywhere with them now, but at the time I felt disgraced and "uncool" at having to walk around with any adults and was certainly not willing to do so if I could at all help it.

No one really likes to be embarrassed or publicly disgraced, although some have a much lower threshold than others as to what will do that. The disciples could have easily been ashamed of Jesus' name. He appeared to be a miserable failure. He had not overthrown the Romans, as people expected a Messiah to do. He was put to death by them, instead, in the most shameful and humiliating manner possible at the time (and maybe for all time). There was nothing about him or being his follower that brought prestige and now to top that off he was gone and no longer with them. Yet, the disciples knew the truth. They knew that he had resurrected from the dead and that they were obeying God because of that, they let nothing deter them from being witnesses wherever they went and were willing to scoff at the idea of being disgraced in front of their fellow man.

➤ Read Acts 5:27-42

- Why were the disciples so willing to throw off concerns of what their fellow human beings thought, and even willing to buck up against the religious and civil authority of their day?
- Are you equally willing to be persecuted or shamed for the simple act of sharing your faith?
- I know that I can often back down from an opportunity to share my faith in a store or some other public place because I get timid, what can we learn from verse 29 that will really help us in situations like that?
- Really take some time to think about if you would be willing to go to jail and lose all of your possessions just so you could share your faith? If not, why?
- In verse 40, the disciples are flogged for refusing to follow the rules about not proclaiming Jesus.

- Imagine a time in the not-so-distant future where Christianity is considered a blight upon society and it is illegal to share one's faith publicly, having been deemed hate speech.
- Would you stand up for the gospel of Jesus Christ under those conditions and be willing to be labeled an enemy of the culture and even be flogged or worse for declaring the gospel?
- What holds you back, if anything, from having that kind of loyalty to Jesus?
- The disciples rejoiced because they had been counted "worthy" to suffer disgrace for Jesus Christ
- Do you consider being ridiculed or thought of as strange by your friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors, as something to be rejoiced about?
- Why do you think they were rejoicing about that?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Ephesians 6:19-20 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Hello Culture - Day 7

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Just the other day I got somewhat challenged on the idea of needing to be baptized for the forgiveness of sin. It was a situation that kind of came out of nowhere and I had no time to think or put together the perfect answer. At first, I started to go through Scripture after Scripture to make my case and show why it was the most logical and correct view. I could quickly tell, however, that I was getting nowhere.

Then I thought of Acts 7 and I decided to change my strategy a bit. I decided to carefully tell the story, in a very brief way, of how modern American, evangelical Christianity got to the place that it is today. I focused on how they have come to stress the "savior" part of Jesus while virtually ignoring the "Lord" part. As a result people come to church when it suits them but they rarely submit in obedience to God's complete will. I was then able to stress how frustrating that must be for those that really do understand that we are to lay down our lives and follow Christ, and showed them that a big part of the problem is how salvation is taught today as opposed to the biblical heart of dying to oneself and entering into the life of Christ at baptism.

This change in strategy worked quite well and being able to see their own story and frustrations in my words helped them open up to the truth of what I was saying rather than being completely on the defensive about a "doctrinal issue." That tact won't always be effective, but there is some great value in being able to address a culture or people by having the ability to tell them their own "story".

- Read Acts 6:8-15
 - What was the charge against Stephen
 - Were the charges true or were they a twisting of the facts?
 - Have you ever had anyone twist your actions or words as a Christian? How did you respond?
- Read Acts 7:1-47
 - Why do you think Stephen responded to the charges of his fellow Jews, not by defending himself directly, but by telling them the story of Israel as a people?

- What is the wisdom behind his response to tell the story of his country and his people to those that were criticizing his preaching of the gospel?
- If you were put in a similar position, could you tell the story of Christianity (in very broad and simple terms) in order to show your critics why they were wrong and why you were holding to the true and historic plan of God?
- Read Acts 7:48-53
 - How did Stephen challenge his hearers as a people?
 - What was his purpose in challenging their beliefs and practices rather than defending his own actions directly?
 - When people criticize disciples for sharing their faith or being so active in evangelism, what are some ways that we can be inspired by Stephen and challenge our own culture as a nation and as Christians?
- Read Acts 7:54-60
 - What was the response of those listening to Stephen?
 - Do you think Stephen had a pretty good idea that this was how the crowd was going to react to his words?
 - What should be the standard of success when it comes to declaring the gospel?
 - Is it the response of the crowd?
 - Is it the faithfulness to the message?
 - Why is it important to understand what the standard of success is?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Ezekiel 2:4-8 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Wherever They Went - Day 8

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

I remember as a kid it was very popular for many churches to have specific "soul winning" nights. Those were nights, or sometimes a Saturday morning, where we would walk around a neighborhood and invite people to church, or give them a track to read, or something of that nature. Usually, if it was a good night, about ten percent of the church would show up for these activities but that basically fulfilled the need for a church to be evangelistic, at least in the minds of most. Beyond those special days, though, that was about it as far as sharing our faith on a consistent basis was concerned.

Can you imagine how far the church of the first century would have gotten if only about ten percent of them showed up to invite people out to church once a week during the summer? Many of those who do that sort of thing do so with a great heart, but the early church was much more aggressive than that. They had the best news in the world and they wanted to share it whenever they could, wherever they went. Even after facing harsh persecution, it didn't stop them from sharing their faith. No, the early church was so successful because they believed that everywhere they went was a good place to proclaim the Kingdom of God and that every time was a good time to declare that Jesus really was Lord.

- Read Acts 8:1-3
 - American Christians don't typically, if ever, face persecution of this nature.
 - What type of persecution and opposition are you most likely to face?
 - What is your usual response to those kinds of persecution and opposition?
 - In what ways can persecution and opposition potentially weaken a body of believers?
 - In what ways can persecution and opposition potentially strengthen a body of believers?
- Read 8:4-8
 - What was the response of the disciples in Jerusalem to the stiff persecution that was unleashed on the church?

- Based on what we have seen so far in Acts, what do you think enabled the disciples to have such an uncommon response to their difficult circumstances?
- What was the result of the persecution of the disciples in Jerusalem and their subsequent response for the region of Samaria?
- How did God use the scattering of the disciples to advance the gospel?
- Do you attempt to share the gospel wherever you go?
- If not, what keeps you from doing so?

The gospel spread so rapidly in the first century because the hearts and minds of all of the disciples were firmly set on preaching the gospel wherever they went. Their commitment to the gospel superseded the circumstances that they faced in life. Thus, they proclaimed the gospel to others whether they were going about their normal business on a regular basis or they were being scattered throughout the region as a result of murderous persecution. They were doing what Jesus commanded his disciples to do when he told them to “go” and “make disciples.” Are you just as committed to that command as they obviously were?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Matthew 28:18-20 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

It's All About the Scriptures- Day 9

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

One of my fondest memories of all the years that I played basketball growing up came when I was in college. We had a pretty tough coach that we were playing for and we found ourselves behind at halftime of a game after having played pretty poorly in the first half. Our coach came in holding a ball. He very calmly stared back and forth at us and the ball for several moments and then said "gentlemen, this is a basketball." He then went on to review with us the things that you usually don't hear after five year old pee-wee basketball. He reviewed things like how to dribble, how to pass, and how to stand on defense. We got the point. He was telling us in a somewhat sarcastic manner that we had forgotten the basic fundamental things that were going to make us successful.

When it comes to being a light in our world, we can get bogged down in all kinds of things that slow us down. Evangelism can be a scary concept for a lot of people. We can question ourselves and wonder if we're capable. We can focus on all of the things that could go wrong or be difficult. It can seem overwhelming at times. But this passage reminds us that, at its core, evangelism is simply about obediently sharing the word of God with others.

- Read Acts 8:26-29
 - What was Philip's response to being called to go out and be prepared to share his faith?
 - What might some of Philip's excuses have been in his own mind to not wanting to go run up to the chariot?
- Read Acts 8:30-31
 - Do you think it took some boldness for Philip to ask if he understood what he was reading?
 - Philip was direct and focused in on the man's hunger for the word of God. How can we do that in our own outreach efforts?
- Read Acts 8:32-35
 - All Philip did was explain to this man, through the Scriptures, the good news about Jesus
 - That should be our focus in evangelism as well
 - Does it take some pressure off of you in regard to evangelism, knowing that all you have to do is be willing to proclaim the true good news to others?

- Read Acts 8:36-40
 - Philip shared the essentials from the Scriptures of what this man needed to know to be saved
 - He was open to God's direction; he was obedient; he had confidence in the Scriptures which allowed him to be bold; and he was prepared to share and explain the good news from the Scriptures—those are the simple fundamentals of evangelism
 - Are you prepared and willing to really embrace the simple fundamentals so that you can be used by God to advance the gospels?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on 1 John 2:3-6 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Even Them – Day 10

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The story of Jonah, as captured by the biblical book of the same name, has become one of the most loved accounts in the entire Bible. Jonah was a prophet who was directed by the will of God to go preach to the people of Ninevah. The primary problem with that was that Jonah, like many Jews of his day, did not like the people of Ninevah. He ultimately did not feel that they deserved the love, forgiveness, and mercy of God, yet that is exactly what God offered to the men and women of Ninevah. He proved that they were not beyond his grace.

You probably don't have an entire specific racial group or nation of people that you dislike or don't believe deserve the gospel (although if we're honest, some do still feel that way and need to repent), but many of us encounter types of people or individuals all the time that we assume are beyond the gospel. We might not even realize it but we can give into subtle prejudices and not share our faith with someone because we think they wouldn't be interested or open. Maybe it is because they have too many problems, or are too successful, or they are homosexual, or they are smoking, or they don't "look" interested, or whatever it may be. At different times we have all probably made decisions like that to not share our faith with someone because we didn't feel like it would do any good. The account of Saul's conversion in Acts 9, however, should serve as a powerful reminder that no one is beyond God's grace and the power of the gospel.

- Read Acts 9:1-16
 - What are some reasons that Ananias did not want to go see Saul?
 - Is there any specific people or type of people that you have effectively written off when it comes to the possibility of them being open to the gospel?
 - Do you think that any of the first century Christians could possibly have imagined Saul being open to the gospel of Jesus and becoming a Christian?
 - What was God's response to Ananias' hesitation?
 - What do you think God's response to our hesitations is?
- Read Acts 9:17-19
 - Did Ananias convert Saul?
 - What did convert Saul?

- We can easily hesitate in sharing our faith with others because we think that we wouldn't be able to convert them, but when we do that we think too highly of our own role in the process
- God can call anyone to the gospel and can use anyone to help in that process
- When we disobey and start to think that we know who will respond or who "deserves" to be shared with, or even just limit ourselves to those that are comfortable to share our faith with, we do great disservice to the Lord's will
- Read Acts 9:20-31
 - Imagine the shock of the Christian community to suddenly have their primary persecutor walking among them as one of them
 - Do you think any of them ever envisioned that?
 - After their initial hesitation, what was the response of the Christian community to Paul?
 - What do you think it required of the believers to accept and forgive Saul after he had been responsible for killing some of their close friends and fellow believers?
 - If this is a problem for you, what heart change do you need to indiscriminately share the Bible with the rich and the poor, the seemingly open and the seemingly not-so-open, the warm and the intimidating, and so on?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on 1 Peter 2:1-4 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

A Community of Faith – Day 11

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

I read an article recently about one of the most highly recruited high school basketball players in the past few years. He was declaring his choice of college, a decision that many feel will have great impact on college basketball in the coming year. After declaring his particular choice, he went on to explain why he chose the school that he did. His choice wasn't determined by how good the team was, how impressive their facilities were, how great the fans were, or even what a good reputation the coach had. He said that his decision was determined when he visited the school. The team, and the whole campus really, had such an atmosphere of camaraderie, friendship, and cooperation. That's what drew him to that school and really made his decision for him.

As we seek to evangelize unbelievers we want to be relatable, have excellent worship times, and all the like, but we must never lose sight of the fact that it is being a genuine community of love and faith that will truly help people to see the presence of God. The Word and the Holy Spirit must convict people, but the role that we play is to do our best to truly be a picture of what the Word is calling the unbeliever to become part of. The apostles could demonstrate faith in ways that we cannot, but we can still demonstrate faith and love for one another. Until we do that, we can have all of the campaigns and evangelism times we want and it will not matter much.

➤ Read Acts 9:32-43

- What impact did the healing of Aeneas had on the non-believers in the area of Lydda and Sharon?
- What impact did the raising from the dead of Tabitha have on the people of Joppa?
- Why do you think that miracles caused some people to turn to the Kingdom of God while others continued to resist even after seeing great miracles?
- Although the Christian community might not have the ability to heal people physically as we see in these two examples, we can still care for one another, heal one another, and live by faith as the people of God.

- What are some ways that the body of believers can “heal” one another in such a way as to have a great impact on non-believers who see it or hear of it?
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:24-25
 - This is the kind of response that God’s people want to see when unbelievers come into the fellowship.
 - What kind of mutual faith and life of love does it take for people to experience God really being among us today? Be specific.
 - How does maintaining this kind of community of faith impact evangelism?
 - How can not maintaining this kind of community faith have a negative impact on evangelism?
- Read John 13:34-35
 - Why is it important to remember that the largest way that we will impact unbelievers is how we love and care for each other within the body of Christ?
 - Do you give the deepest part of your loyalty, commitment, and heart to God’s people?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Romans 1:8 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Dare to be Different – Day 12

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Several years ago a young disciple was struggling in prayer one morning with the idea that he had grown comfortable in sharing his faith with others. He was concerned that he was only reaching out to people like him and that this wouldn't be good in the long run, but that in the short run it was further cementing his timidity. So he spent some time praying that he would have the courage to reach out that day to the most intimidating or scary person that he saw. After work that afternoon he intentionally decided to stop at a grocery store just to look for someone that was intimidating. After a few minutes he spotted someone that didn't look anything like him and he was intimidated, so he quietly said a quick prayer and strode up to him to share his faith.

The man that this disciple shared his faith with that day was me. If that brother had not been willing to step outside of his comfort zone, I would never had heard the gospel that day. It underscores the fact that we need to be intentional in sharing our faith. The world is full of people that prefer to live by, work with, and spend time with people who are like them. But sharing the gospel cannot be that way. The gospel is to go to all nations and unless we keep that in mind and remain very intentional about sharing the word with people of all types we will never be the multi-faceted people that God wants us to be.

➤ Read Acts 11:4-10

- Peter was given this vision of unclean animals coming to him because the Jewish Christians had failed to take up Jesus' call to go to all nations. They evidently felt that to share the gospel in Jerusalem and surrounding areas to Jews who were visiting from all nations was enough. They certainly seemed hesitant to evangelize the Gentiles.
- God wanted to make clear that the gospel is for all people and it is not up to us to decide to whom we will share it
- We will not often consciously choose to not share the gospel with certain groups of people but the same effect can be had if we only share the truth with those that we find easy to share with or the types of people that we're around everyday

- We must be intentional and thoughtful about sharing the gospel with the young and old, men and women, people of all races, rich and poor, and so on.
- Do you intentionally share the gospel with all kinds of people, including those that you don't have much in common with or with whom you are a bit uncomfortable around?
- Read Acts 11:11-14
 - Once the Spirit had prepared Peter's heart to share the gospel with all people, including Gentiles, what happened immediately?
 - When we are open to the Spirit leading us to wherever he will, we will find that he will do just that
 - What types of people do you feel most comfortable sharing your faith with?
 - What types of people do you feel most uncomfortable sharing your faith with?
 - What types of people most easily intimidate you when it comes to sharing your faith?
 - Are you willing to be used by God to reach out to even those that are not easy for you to do so?
 - Be open with God this week and then really seek to treat nothing "unclean" or "off limits" and intentionally share your faith with those that are most difficult for you

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Galatians 3:26-29 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Dealing With Opposition – Day 13

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

I was on a college campus in Africa a few years ago sharing my faith with some disciples there when we walked into the middle of a large crowd of students. It appeared that most of the people in the crowd were Muslim with a few Hindus in there for good measure. As I was sharing my faith openly, a group of three Muslim men came up and surrounded me. There was one main guy who got right in my face while the other two stood at my sides and slightly behind me. Their intent was to intimidate me into backing down so that we would leave. Up to that point I never really knew how I would respond in such a situation. It was a bit a scary, but I said a little prayer in my head and knew I had to respond. Through the strength of the Holy Spirit I didn't back down at all and in fact challenged him to come to the lesson that I was about to give on the resurrection of Jesus, if he “had the guts.”

Trusting in the Spirit in that moment and responding with his boldness allowed us to be much more effective with the rest of the people in that group as several wound up coming out to hear the lesson. In fact, those three guys all came out to the lesson and signed up on a list to study the Bible (although to my knowledge they have not yet become Christians).

If we are sharing our faith boldly, we will face opposition. Jesus promised that. I don't think that we can talk about preparing for that opposition enough because it can be so challenging when it comes. Today's section will help us to gain some further insight into the early Christian ability to stand up boldly in the face of opposition and to continue to successfully share their faith.

- Read Acts 13:4-8
 - What did Elymas do while Barnabas and Saul were trying to spread the gospel?
 - Why do you think that Elymas cared enough about what they were doing to try to oppose them spreading the gospel?
 - What are some common ways that people oppose the spread of the gospel today?
 - Have you ever had someone directly work against you in your efforts to share your faith with others?
 - What was your response?

- If you've never had that happen, how do you think you would respond in that type of situation?
- Read Acts 13:9-12
 - Why do you think that the Holy Spirit is the first person mentioned when it comes to Paul's response to his opposition?
 - What can we do to be filled with the Holy Spirit in these types of situations?
 - What sort of preparation can we do daily to help us when unforeseen opposition comes our way?
 - What do you think gave Paul the boldness to respond the way that he did?
 - We might not use the exact words and probably won't be able to call blindness down on someone, but when we allow the Holy Spirit to use us, we will find ourselves being bold beyond what we could ever imagine.
 - Are you willing to stand up to opposition and be used by the Holy Spirit like this?
 - What happened as a result of Paul's boldness?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Good News for the Prosperous – Day 14

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Maybe you're not like me at all, but I have to admit that when it comes to sharing my faith, my default position is to look for the easiest situations that I can find. I like to share my faith with people and in situations that are comfortable. I even have to admit that when I'm in public and don't know people, I tend towards sharing my faith with people that look a little more "in need" of the gospel. I'm not saying that's right, but it's what I tend towards if I'm not careful. It seems much easier to share the gospel with those who are poor, or in need, or who are having obvious distress in their life. But sharing the gospel with those that are rich, seem happy, or seem to be doing quite well in life can be much more difficult, at least for me. We can be tempted to take a pass on those folks, assuming that they wouldn't be very interested in the gospel anyway.

Certainly Jesus said that the gospel is good news for the poor and downtrodden, but we must never forget that it is also good news for the rich, powerful, and successful. We want to make sure that we find the middle ground between being intimidated into not sharing our faith with those type of people and glorifying them and only sharing our faith with the rich and powerful, or even showing them favoritism of some kind. Most importantly, we have to not fall into the false line of thinking that the "haves" of the world do not need or would not be interested in the true gospel.

➤ Read Acts 16:13-15

- A dealer of purple cloth would have been rather wealthy and influential
- What was Lydia's response when she heard Paul's message?
- What did she then do?
- How much of a help do you think it would have been for Paul and the Christians to suddenly have the home of this wealthy woman to use for the purposes of the Kingdom?
- Did Paul share his faith with her for that purpose or do you think God provided through Paul's willingness to share his faith to all people and through Lydia's humble faith?

➤ Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

- Paul implies that there will be some wealthy Christians in the body of Christ.

- What does he instruct Timothy to command the rich among them
- Do you get intimidated when sharing your faith with powerful people, successful people, or those that seem to have everything going well for them?
- Why do you think it is so intimidating for you to share your faith with these type of people?
- How do we overcome this type of obstacle in our own hearts?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Luke 2:10 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.

Proclaiming to Unbelievers – Day 15

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

The other day I was watching a commercial with several young people. The commercial was for an insurance company. It depicts a farmer’s market where suddenly out of nowhere, the comedian Gallagher rushes in with his mallet and starts smashing watermelons. In my opinion the commercial was very funny, but then I looked at the young folks and none of them were laughing. As it turns out, they were all confused because they had no idea who Gallagher was. He was before their time which meant they had no context to put the commercial in and just didn’t see the humor in it.

Of course in one sense, everyone that we wish to share the gospel with could be considered an unbeliever. But experience should tell us that it is a very different thing to declare the gospel to someone that has a Christian background as opposed to someone who has very little to no Christian background at all. When we share our faith with those that have no Christian background, we have to do it a bit differently because like those young folks who didn’t know who Gallagher was, they will have little idea who Jesus is, what the purpose of the Bible is, and what the gospel is at all. It will be up to us to present the gospel in such a way so that it will make sense to them. This is why Acts 17 is so valuable because Paul found himself with the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to a gathering of people who had absolutely no Jewish or Christian background whatsoever. His response is very instructional for us who live in an ever-increasing non-Christian society.

➤ Read Acts 17:16-21

- When Paul preached to Jews or God-fearing Greeks, he could get right to the heart of the gospel and call them to a decision
- But notice that the Athenians considered his teaching about resurrection and the Kingdom to be “strange ideas” and they were confused as to what he meant
- We have to be careful with people with no Christian background or understanding because we can think we’re presenting the gospel to them or studying the Bible, but they might have little idea of the true meaning of the words we use or the ideas that we present
- We have to examine everything we do in these cases. Even asking someone to “study the Bible” might be confusing for them and we would need to define what we mean by that

- What are some of the things that you think you might need to do differently when sharing your faith with someone with no Christian background?
- Read Acts 17:22-23
 - Why do you think that Paul first compliments them on their religious commitment and zeal?
 - Why do you suppose his next step is to establish some kind of common ground by saying that they had an unknown god and now he was going to explain to them who that was?
 - Why wouldn't he just declare that they were all wrong?
 - What are some ways that we can find common ground with unbelievers so as to establish a beachhead from which to share the gospel?
- Read Acts 17:24-31
 - Once Paul had established some common ground he began to define for them who God is. Why do you suppose he took the time to do that?
 - Could you explain who God is and what his purpose for humanity is to someone with no Christian background in a matter of 10-15 minutes? If not, how could you go about learning how to do that?
- Read Acts 17:32-34
 - Finally, once he has defined God and his purposes in the world for his audience, Paul gets to the heart of the gospel: the resurrection of Jesus and the life of Christ that is available to all
 - What were the varying responses of the people?
 - Not everyone will respond to the gospel no matter how well we present it, but if we are willing to share, God will move the hearts of some.
 - Do you believe that he can and will use you?

Time to Ponder

- Read and meditate on Romans 10:14-15 today.
- Write out one way that this passage challenges you as read it today.
- Write down one conviction that you can either make or renew in your life based on this study.