

Last weekend we celebrated with over a dozen people who made the decision to be baptized. To go under the water is a living picture of being joined with Jesus in his death and burial, and to come out of the water is a living picture of being joined with Jesus in his resurrection life. One of my favorite questions to ask someone when they are getting ready to be baptized or after their baptism is, “Who helped you come to the place where you are ready to make this decision today?” Some people say it was my wife who encouraged me to come to church. Or it was my parents who pointed me to Jesus. Or it was a co-worker who invited me to a Bible study. Or it was a friend who was always there when I needed them. Or it was a sermon that I heard preached that clearly spelled out the gospel and convinced me I needed a savior. Almost every time someone makes the decision to become a Christian, it’s not because they are on a walk in the woods and an angel appears to them. It’s not because they are alone in their room and have a eureka moment all by themselves. Almost every time someone becomes a Christian, it was the result of the influence, the love, the invitation, the witness of another Christian. Take a moment right now and share with a person you are sitting next to. If you are a Christian, share the name of the person who helped influence your decision for Jesus and maybe a couple sentences of how they had an impact. If you are not a Christian, share the name of someone you know who is a Christian who has been a positive example to you.

Most of the time when the kingdom moves forward, it moves forward as people who already love and follow Jesus tell others about Jesus. This week I started reading a biography of William Carey. He is known as the father of modern missions. He was an Englishman who moved to India in the 18th century and spent over 40 years there. He translated the Bible into six Indian languages and laid the groundwork for literally millions of people who had never heard about Jesus to become Christians. How was he converted? As a teenager, he was an apprentice shoemaker, and his fellow apprentice told him about Jesus, talked to him daily about the impact of the gospel on his own life, and invited him to a prayer meeting. Before long, he trusted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. A co-worker sharing his faith with a non-believer ultimately changed the trajectory of an entire nation. Whether the impact is small or large, Jesus has called all his followers to tell others about him. That is the essence of the passage we are going to study in Matthew today. Here is my goal and hope for today: for every single follower of Jesus to feel inspired, motivated, committed, and commissioned to share Jesus with others. That’s what we are hoping for. For every single person who is here today who knows Jesus, to be inspired, motivated, committed, and commissioned by God himself to live on mission for his glory and kingdom. Last week I told you to put your notebooks down and use your imagination. Today, I want to encourage you to take notes, as we learn ten things that are true about you when you tell people about Jesus. Write these down. There is way too much content today to memorize, but write them down, review them, and see which of these really resonates with your heart.

1. When you tell people about Jesus, you are an expression of Jesus’ compassion.

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). When Jesus saw people in need, he cared deeply. The word “compassion” here Jesus could feel it in his stomach; he was moved physically. The same is true of the heart of Jesus for your family members, your neighbors, and your co-workers

who do not know Jesus yet. God is filled with compassion for them. God loves them. God cares for them more deeply than we can possibly imagine, and because of that, he wants us to go to them.

A few months ago, I was driving home from church one afternoon on a country road with farm fields on either side. About 150 yards in front of me I saw an elderly man on a mobile scooter. I watched as he tried to turn around in the street but fell over, hitting his head against the asphalt. I stopped my car and ran to him. He had gashed his head and was bleeding profusely. He seemed concussed. I later found out he was 92 years old. My heart went out to him. What did I do? I don't have medical skills, so I called someone who could help. I called 911 and an ambulance came within minutes. There was a physical need and I was moved by compassion to call someone to help. Spiritually speaking, Jesus looks at people who he created, who he loves, who he wants to spend eternity with, whose well-being he cares for beyond measure. What does he do? He calls someone for help. He calls you! Any and every person you know who is not in a relationship with Jesus is in a far more dangerous and precarious situation than that injured man I came across. Jesus cares deeply, so he calls you to help.

2. When you tell people about Jesus, you are meeting a genuine need.

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few’” (Matthew 9:37). Many people need to know about Jesus, but so few people are ready and willing to share about him. We live in a country with a Christian heritage, where everyone knows the name of Jesus as a historical and spiritual figure, but only a small percentage of people have a personal relationship with him, know him as Lord and Savior, and know him well enough that they want others to know. The person in your life who is far from God may not have 100 chances to hear. You might be their very best chance. Don't pass it up.

I remember being in a foreign country that is less than 1% Christian. I was in a train station with thousands of other people, moving like ants in a colony. In my mind's eye I saw little bubbles next to people's heads, like in cartoons. An older man would walk by and his bubble would say, “Is there any meaning to life?” A teenager would walk by and his bubble would say, “Will I ever have the chance to hear about Jesus?” A middle-aged woman would walk by and her bubble would say, “What's going to happen when I die?” There is almost no one in that country to tell them. The Creek has helped plant several churches in that country. We send missionaries to that country to answer those questions. Your giving makes that possible. But what about the people in this country, in your world? They need to hear, too. Don't pass up the chance to share. I want to commend the men in our church on this front. So many of the guys in this church invited people to the conference last weekend. We had hundreds of guests. You guys are living on mission and making an impact. Well done!

3. When you tell people about Jesus, you are an answer to someone else's prayers.

“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38). So many people need Jesus, and there are people constantly praying for God to raise people up to share the good news with them. This is not just general; this is deeply personal. I have an immediate family member who I love dearly. This is someone I grew up with. Someone

I would do anything for, give anything for. He doesn't know Jesus. Because I live in a different state, I have very limited opportunities to influence him for Jesus. I can text and call and do my best when I see him in person like once a year, but my window for impact is so small. That's just reality. Do you know what I have to do? I have to cry out to God to raise up someone who can influence him in ways I can't. God, might a friend, might a neighbor, might a co-worker, might anyone be sent to share with him the love of Jesus. God, raise someone up to bring him to you. I pray that prayer constantly. You might be praying a prayer like that for someone you love. That's a great prayer to pray. But I want you to stop and consider this: someone else might be praying that exact prayer for the neighbor who just moved in next door to you, for the coworker who just joined your team, for the person you sit down next to at Starbucks. When you tell people about Jesus, you are literally becoming the answer to someone else's prayers.

4. When you tell people about Jesus, focus on people who appear open.

When Jesus told his disciple to go and share the message, "(He sent these twelve disciples out) with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel'" (Matthew 10:5-6). Jesus clearly cared about the Gentiles and the Samaritans. Jesus wanted them to be saved just as much as he wanted the Jews to be saved. God is no respecter of persons. But on this specific mission, the disciples only had a limited window of time. They couldn't go to everyone, so Jesus told them to go to those who were most open—not to people who had never heard of the Messiah, but to the people who had been praying and hoping for him for centuries, to tell them he was here. He wanted them to have a strategic focus on people who were ready and open. Likewise, when we think about how to spend our time for greatest impact, rather than spending all our time with a hardened atheist who is hostile toward faith, it's usually more profitable to invest into relationships where we sense openness and receptivity. God can save anyone! We should pray and hope for everyone's salvation. But we should look for people who are open and interested.

5. When you tell people about Jesus, expect disinterest and opposition.

Jesus makes this clear to his disciples in two ways. First, he says you are going to encounter disinterest. "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet" (Matthew 10:14). Some people just don't want to hear what you have to say. You might ask them questions about the meaning and purpose of life, about the reliability of the Scriptures, about the teaching of Jesus, and it is clear that they want absolutely nothing to do with the discussion. They have no curiosity or interest. If someone slams the door in your face, don't keep pounding on it. That is counterproductive most of the time. Simply go to the next door, and maybe circle back with them a little bit later.

Sometimes it's not simply disinterest; it's opposition. Jesus says two verses later, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues" (Matthew 10:16-17). Jesus knew that his disciples were going to be attacked. Some would be arrested. Some would be beaten. Most would eventually be executed. We live in different times. We have a constitution that guarantees us religious freedom. We can be grateful we don't face physical persecution, but we should not be surprised if we are rejected or perhaps

even considered feeble-minded, mocked for believing in fairytales, and demeaned for needing religion as an emotional crutch. People rejected Jesus and we are not better than him. If they rejected him, they'll reject us, too. We should be prepared for that sort of reaction. But he also told us he would be with us at those moments!

6. When you tell people about Jesus, expect God to speak to you and through you.

In Matthew 10:19-20, Jesus told his disciples, “Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Jesus promised that although we will be the ones speaking, he will be the one communicating. It's not like we become puppets and God is the ventriloquist; it's more organic and natural than that. God is dynamically and powerfully present when the gospel is shared. Some people have never heard the truth that God created them, that God knows them, that God loves them. God uses you to speak that truth. Some people have never had someone articulate the reality that they are a sinner who has rebelled against God's laws and are in danger of experiencing the spiritual and eternal consequences of sin. They haven't heard that the purpose of the cross was to pay their debt to sin, to set them free from their former way of life, to bring them into the family of God and offer them the gift of eternal life. God gives you those words, and then you get to be the one to communicate the greatest news in the history of the world. An undeniable cooperation and partnership with God happens during the entire interaction.

7. When you tell people about Jesus, expect even those closest to you, even your immediate family members, to disagree with you.

This is a difficult reality to face. Because Jesus claims ultimate loyalty in our lives, if you love Jesus and someone in your family does not love Jesus, it often causes a serious rift. Jesus said, “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:21-22). He also said, “I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household” (Matthew 10:35-36).

I know many of you have felt that heartbreaking pain. Your parents have distanced themselves from you because of your faith; your grown children have distanced themselves from you because of your faith. Feeling rejected and ostracized by someone in your family who you love dearly because of your faith is one of the saddest experiences possible. I want to share a word with anyone here today who has experienced someone you love dearly with whom there is distance because of your faith. I know how much that hurts. God knows how much that hurts. God has a way of meeting you in that pain and filling that void like no one else can. As you draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

8. When you tell people about Jesus, Jesus tells his father about you.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33). In other words, here on earth we have the privilege of telling

people about Jesus, how loving, gracious, powerful, and kind he is. We get to tell them about all he's done for us. As we are talking to others about Jesus, at the same time, Jesus is talking to God the Father about us, about our devotion to him, about our commitment to him, about our faithfulness to him. He is saying, "Look at your son, look at your daughter—they are so passionate for your glory and kingdom that they are telling others about your love. I'm so proud of them." Doesn't it bring joy to your heart to imagine Jesus saying your name in heaven?

I have a good friend from Kentucky who was given front row seats to a UK basketball game last week, and with the seats came private access to the arena. While they were going through security in private access, one of the announcers from ESPN was also walking in. My friends made it through smoothly, but the security guards wouldn't let the world-famous ESPN announcer in. They harassed him and held him up for several minutes because he didn't have his official credentials. After he eventually got through, my friend, who saw the entire thing, went over and apologized. He said, "That's not southern hospitality. That's not how we do it in Kentucky. I am going to make it up to you. I own a car detailing business. Here's my card. Bring the Bentley you pulled up in to our shop, and I'll give you a free custom detail to make up for it." Halfway through the game, my friend's phone started blowing up. That announcer told the story during the broadcast. He mentioned my friend's business by name, brought up a logo of his company for everyone watching on primetime ESPN to see, and raved about the incredible hospitality and kindness of a fan. Not only was his phone blowing up with all his friends telling him about it, but his business has been booked out for weeks now. To have a commentator talk about you like that on air—that's pretty sweet if you are a business owner. Imagine how much sweeter to have Jesus himself, in heaven, talking about you to the father. It doesn't get any better than that! And that's the reality when we share our faith.

9. When you tell people about Jesus, you represent Jesus himself.

Listen to the way Jesus expressed this to his disciples: "“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me”" (Matthew 10:40). When the president of the United States sends an ambassador to a country to work out some sort of deal, the ambassador is speaking on behalf of the president. You get a tariff. We want Greenland. Whatever it is. The ambassador is speaking, but he represents the president. When we are telling people about Jesus, we are speaking, but we represent Jesus himself. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”" When you share your faith, it's like God is appealing to people through you to be reconciled to him!

10. When you tell people about Jesus, you are simply sharing with others the hope that has changed your life.

When the disciples went out, Jesus reminded them, "“Freely you have received; freely give”" (Matthew 10:8). God has lavished on you the gifts of forgiveness, grace, and salvation. How could you possibly keep it to yourself? Tell people what God has done for you! Remember the man I mentioned earlier in the message, William Carey, who was won over to Jesus by his co-worker? Just weeks after William came to Christ, his boss, the man who he was apprenticed under and who owned the cobbler shop, fell terribly ill. William went to him in his room and told

him about Jesus, and about the salvation he himself had received. His boss accepted Christ. He only lived a few more days, but in those final days, he told every person he saw about his new-found faith in Jesus, and his certainty of heaven. There was a time when the apostles, after Jesus had been raised from the dead, were arrested and threatened if they continued to preach about Jesus. They were told not to tell anyone else about him. I love how they responded: “Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:19-20). That’s the heart God wants us to have. We cannot help telling others what God has done for us!