

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

Challenge 12: Outreach

Session 1: Why Are Christians So Convinced Christianity Is Special?

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning men. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans Chapter five and let's go with verse six. And as we get going today we're going to do a shout out to Men of Northland. It's a group of seven guys up at Northland Church right here in town. They join us for the video Bible study. Paul Heyd is the leader. I don't know if it's Hyde or Heyd or Heyde. So Paul I'm sorry about that.

By the way, we have more than one group up there at Northland so that's pretty exciting. And by the way guys, since you're in town come see us some time, we'd love to have you visit. Why don't you join me in giving a very warm and rousing welcome to Men in Northland. One, two, three.

Welcome guys. We're glad to have you with us.

We're in this series, Journey to Biblical Manhood. We're starting to the final of the 12 challenges which is outreach. The title of the message today, Why are Christians So Convinced Christianity is Special.

You might think that the starting point for a talk on outreach would be something like The Great Commission go and make disciples or Acts chapter 1:8. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses here there and everywhere." However, however, we have a prior problem that we need to address and that is that usually when we talk about outreach there is an immediate sense of guilt, shame, fear, lethargy, complacency, I don't want to do that, I can't do that, I don't know how to do that. I've not even convinced myself, how am I going to convince somebody else. It's not my job. It's not my gift.

And so, we can ask you to be obedient to the Scriptures, share your faith by shaming you, guilt in you and pointing out your obligation, which is referred to in Theology as legalism. Or we can invite you to obedience by helping you get into the overflow of an understanding of God's love and grace which leads to a spirit of gratitude and then you obey out of a sense of grace.

Basically, people want to tell other people about things they're excited about. People want to tell other people about things they're excited about. And so, I understand. Maybe you are excited about Jesus and his and his gospel and his goodness but people who are excited about something like to tell other people about. That's why we call them evangelists.

There are book evangelists. There are gym evangelists. There are diet evangelists. There are tax reform evangelists. There are people who are so excited about their team, they can't help it. They just have to talk about their team to anybody that will listen. Oh, have you seen my Auburn Tigers or have you seen my Florida Gators. Or whatever else there is out there like Michigan State, wow, get over it buddy, get over it. Or excited about our kids, we just can't stop talking about them.

And so, why is it then that some people are just so excited about Jesus and His Gospel that they just can't stop talking about it. Others of us don't maybe have that same level of enthusiasm.

I think the idea is not to tell you how important it is to tell people about Jesus. That's our starting point. I'm not going to tell you this morning about why it's so important for us to tell people about Jesus. But instead, I think I want to tell you about Jesus and help you see how wonderful he is and then when you are staggered by the incredible love, grace and mercy of God, so filled up in your own overflow and your own relationship that you will just not be able to not talk about him. You actually become an evangelist.

So, the idea here, do you get it, do you see this, do you see how important this is that it's not telling you that this is something you need to do, it's helping you experience this thing in such a way that you can't help talking about it. That's what an evangelist does, that's what an evangelist is all about.

So, let's get started. The life changing power of our story Romans Chapter 5, we're to start at verse six, I really want to focus on at verse eight but we'll start at verse 6. And this is Paul. And by the way if you think about Paul's life and you think about how far away he was from God, he was the persecutor of the church, if you think about how far away he was from God and then you think about how far he came, you could just see the chasm between from where he was to where he ended up and he was just so overwhelmed that he was able to have the Lord bring him across that chasm. He was just so overwhelmed, he just couldn't stop talking about it.

So he says in verse six, "You see at just the right time when we were still powerless." There had to be some sense of which he was thinking about his own shadow case, the shadow case of his own life here. When we were still powerless, when we were still addicted, when we were still haters of God. When we were still cursing at our wife. When we were still cheating our boss, whatever it is, Christ died for that. He died for the ungodly. The ungodly. Christ died for the ungodly.

There's so much more to be said. Very rarely will anyone die for a good man, though for a good man someone may possibly dare die. I remember walking through the Pentagon halls when I was invited to speak up there once, a couple times, and I remember the first time I went I said could I go to see the Hall of Heroes. And it was so sacred, so somber, so holy. It's the only way to describe it. Men who are willing to die for other men. Very rarely will that happen. And so we celebrate it with the Hall of Heroes.

And then verse eight, "But God demonstrates his holiness in this, While we were still sinners Christ died for us." "But God demonstrates His Holiness in this," doesn't say that, it doesn't say that. Is God holy? Well, heck yeah he's holy. I mean, if you ever watch Cosmos, the Space Odyssey, the Neil DeGrasse Tyson Series, you just see the vastness of the universes and everything, oh my gosh. Yeah, yeah, he's holy. What is it in the omnipotence or the omnipresence, the holiness, the greatness, what possible reason would there be for him to send Christ to die for sinners. Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

The only really attribute of God that is big enough to inspire him to do something to help you is his love. God has done for love what he could not do for any other reason.

And so the Scripture says something different. It says, but God demonstrates or show us his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Now, there's so many ways that the gospels express in the scripture and really we're going to, I think the next series we're going to do we're going to look at Jesus without the glitter. Maybe that's the title for the next series, I'm not sure. Jesus without the glitter. And we'll just look at all these beautiful ways that this Gospel, this story is expressed.

But what I want to do today is I want to stay to see this beautiful powerful in all its splendor. One more time to experience or reexperience the story so that we won't be the guy that says, "Mommy, do I have to go to school today?" "Honey, I just don't feel like going to work today." "Do I have to go to the gym." "Do I have to get together with my family next weekend." "Do I have to share my faith and make disciples? I know I should. It's just not me. It's just not who I am. Sorry. See you on the other side. If somebody else talks to you about it that is."

J. Gresham Machen has to be one of the smartest theologians who's ever graced our planet. He was at the Westminster Theology Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and he wrote this book called "Christianity and Liberalism." I love this book, and I love it for a lot of reasons but one of the quotes that I'm going to read to you from, in this book talks about Christianity and how it comes about. And he says this, how is this life produced, this Christian life? It might be produced by exhortation. In other words, I just or somebody just tells you the tenets of the faith, the doctrines, the principles, the dogma of the faith.

But that of course was the approach of the Hellenists and it's always been a powerless form of transformation. Although, he says, these preachers were powerful in their preaching they were nevertheless never successful in transforming society. He says this and this is what I want you to hear. "The strange thing about Christianity was that it adopted an entirely different method. It transformed and transforms the lives of men," watch this, "not by appealing to human will but by telling a story. Not by exhortation but by the narration of an event, the birth, life, death, resurrection of Jesus. It is no wonder that such a method seems strange. Could anything be more impractical then the attempt to influence conduct by rehearsing the events concerning the death of a religious leader." You with me?

But the strange thing is, it works. Where the most eloquent exhortation fails, the simple story of an event succeeds. The lives of men are transformed by a piece of news.

Now, lest you think that this little story, I already know I have way too much to talk to about this morning. But lest you think that this story is just some boring dull historical event ... I want to read a little bit from Dorothy Sayers. She was an English mystery writer. "It is the dogma that is the drama, not beautiful phrases," Oh, God love you so much, "not comforting sentiments." Oh, you're going to be okay, "nor vague aspirations to the loving, kindness and uplift nor the promise of something nice after that but the terrifying assertion that the same God who made the world cosmos, lived in the world and passed through the grave and the gate of death." Then she said this, "so that is the outline of the official story. The life changing power of the official story."

"The talk of the time when God was the underdog and got beaten. When he submitted to the conditions he had laid down and became a man like the men he had made. And the men he had made broke him

and killed him." And as if to make her point, she says, "This is the dogma we find so dull. This terrifying drama of which God is the victim and the hero." And she goes on to say, "If this is dull, then what in heaven's name is worthy of being called exciting?"

And so, we have a compelling problem that we're trying to help men face. We have a compelling problem that we are facing ourselves. That said so right here in Romans Chapter five. It says when we were still powerless.

As long as a man feels like he has even a scintilla of power left to try to right his life, to overcome his addiction, to become powerful in the world, to become successful, as long as a man still can cling to any remnant that he could do it himself, tendency is he will. And it's when you and I come to understand that we have inside of us sin, we are not sin but we have sin living in us even if we believe and that that sin is a destructive force that is constantly trying to drag us back down. And to pretend it's not there is to join with Machen's liberals I guess. But it's to understand that we have this force within us, the flesh wars against the spirit, spirit against the flesh, that is attempting to drag us back down.

And not only that. Part of the compelling problem is that we feel so alone in this when we're trying to do ourselves on our own, we feel alone. We feel a sense of cosmic loneliness. It's not just lonely, it's not just that I'm alone in the world but I'm alone everywhere. I look out there and there's nobody there, nobody to help me. I'm all alone. Men feel the weight of this, the gravitas of that and it is good that they do. Because when that happens, you see at just the right time when we were still powerless Christ died for us. He demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners he died, he died for us. Oh my gosh, what an incredible story and it's because of this incredible drama that we have a story to tell. And it is because you are grateful and only if you're grateful for this story that you will then share it with other people.

And so, I'm going to give you the Big Idea now. I've been putting the big ideas in the first person for all of us. And so the Big Idea today is that this is my motivation for outreach. **My motivation for outreach. I am sort of staggered by the love of Jesus that I can't keep it in and be happy.** I'm just so staggered. I am. Every time I look at this story, I reexperience this love of, this incredible love that Jesus talks about, as the father has loved me so have I loved you. Every time I get into that, I'm so staggered by that. Aren't you? Aren't you just staggered by this story? And if you're not, this is where ... Don't forget about outreach.

If you're not staggered by the love of Jesus, if you can keep it in, then keep it in. If you can keep it in, keep it in. That sounds like a Cat Stevens song. If you can keep it in, keep it in. Oh no, no, no, I can't keep it in, I can't keep it in. Gotta let it out, gotta let it out.

This is the big idea, this is the big idea. Now, we've looked at little bit just basically a glancing blow off this beautiful story. Just what are some of the words that come to your mind when you hear the story of Jesus? The life changing power of our story, the life changing power of put a blank there, what kind of story is it? Just shout out to me, shout them out. What kind of story is this to you?

Humility, it's a humble story. What else? Unconditional love, what else? He died for all of us. All of us. What else? Compassion. What else? Service. What else? Life changing. Transformational.

Had to start on you so I wrote down some things. What kind of story is it? It's an intervention. It's an intervention into our life. God orchestrated a three party intervention. The father, the son and the holy spirit and he said, "Let me tell you, I love you, I want you to know I love you very much but this isn't going to end well the way you're treating your wife. This isn't going to end well you drinking yourself into a stupor. This isn't going to end well but I love you very much." It's an intervention, it's a love story. It's the official story, it's a beautiful story, it's a sacred story, it's a holy story, it's a strange story. It's a miraculous story.

Taking from Neil Postman in his book "Amusing Ourselves to Death." I'm an evangelist for this book even though he wrote it I think in like 1985, I'm an evangelist for this book, "Amusing Ourselves to Death." He talks about, he's actually quoting another writer but he talks about just the, he's talking about the problem of epistemology. How do we know things, how do we, and he just talks about the power of resonance, resonance. He talks about how resonance, there's a, and resonance comes through metaphor and metaphors that generative power of change. So Christ died for my sins, that's a metaphor. Jesus on the cross, it's a reality but it's also a very powerful metaphor that transforms our lives.

So it's a resonance story. It's our story. It's my story. It's a sacrificial story. It's a powerful story. A compelling story. Mysterious, staggering, strategic, relevant. Can't read that one. Convincing, immersive. Unconventional. Oh, it makes me want to "whoop"! It's a makes me want to whoop story, whoop. Makes me want to whoop. Does it make you want to whoop? Whoop! I remember that's exactly the sound I made when Auburn knocked off Georgia 40 to 17, whoop! I was excited. I wanted to tell everybody.

All right, so this is a story for everyone. Ah, I just don't have time to talk about that today. I'll talk about it next time. It is. It's a story for everybody. God is not willing that any would perish but that all ... Not willing, that's like the creed will but it's not the desire of God's heart that anyone perish. But then everyone will come to repentance. Oh my goodness. Does that really mean Larry too? Oh no, I can't go to heaven if Larry's going to heaven. He'll never stop talking.

It's a story for everyone. It's the most inclusive religion in the world. Did you know that? Christianity is the only religion that actually welcomes everyone. You can be Jew, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, gay, straight, rich, poor, black, white, brown, yellow, green. You can be a Republican for crying out loud. Christianity is the biggest tent of all tents. That's because in every other religion you have to perform. You have to do something to make God happier or avoid his wrath. In Christianity, the only requirement is that you admit that you can't do anything to perform or make him happy.

And so, because we're such a welcoming religion that's one of the reasons that we're so messy and have so many kooks. Is that we say to all the other religions, okay, if you don't want them, we'll take them. And so we got them. It's a story for everyone. And I'm motivated for outreach. Even to Larry because I am so staggered by the love of Jesus that I whoop, can't keep it in, whoop, gotta let it out.

Just as I wrap up, turn with me to 2 Corinthians Chapter five. Second Corinthians Chapter five, Chapter two rather, 2 Corinthians 2. Now I'm just going to tiptoe across the peaks of this passage. I love it when the pastor tells me or a teacher tells me, now, we don't have time for this this morning but why don't you read this this afternoon. Has anybody ever actually done that, I don't think so. Well, maybe one person did sometime back in the 1800s. You know, we're so busy, the idea of going back is hard. I will still commend this whole passage to you.

We're going to touch a few of the highlights of it very briefly. And the point here is that we who believe, it's not that we have to tell the story. We don't have to tell the story, we get to tell the story. But you're not going to feel that way unless you really feel compelled by the love of Jesus Christ. If you're staggered by his love. Don't try to figure out how to be obedient and share your faith, just get closer to Jesus and that's what Paul did.

And so, he says, 2 Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God who ..." few words down "through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him." Oh, it's a fragrance story. "For we are to God The aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing." Over to verse three in chapter three, "You show that you are a letter from Christ. The result of our ministry. Written not with ink but by the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of the human heart."

Verse six, "He made us competent as ministers of the new covenant." Whoop. "Not of the letter of but of the Spirit for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life." Chapter 4:7, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not us." Verse 16, "Though outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us and eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

Chapter 5:5, "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come."

Verse 11, "Since then we know what it is to fear, revere the Lord, we try to persuade men." Oh my gosh, look at 14, "For Christ's love compels us." We know the story and we are staggered by this love and Christ's love when embraced and understood more fully and by the way, I've been walking with the Lord for a long time and I've never been able to find the bottom. I've never been able to touch my toes to the bottom of this and I know that I never will. Oh my gosh. Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore Larry died. Even Larry died or especially Larry died. I don't even know anybody named Larry so I don't really have anybody of my that's, you know. Actually I have you in mind.

And then watch this, watch this, watch this, watch this, verse 16, "So from now on we regard no one from a Larry point of view, from a worldly point of view." 17, "If anyone is it Christ, he's a new creation." 18, "All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation and we are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us." Oh my goodness, oh my goodness.

So you can see how motivated Paul was because he embraced not only, he embraced every part of the gospel. He understood how the Gospel solved the deepest problems of our hearts. My motivation for outreach, I'm just so staggered by the love of Jesus that I can't keep it in and be happy. That's where you want to end up. So, if you're not there, don't worry, don't worry, don't share your faith. Don't share your faith. Instead, focus on understanding this story, this story that when rehearsed transforms the lives of men.

Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, Lord thank you for this incredible story of Jesus and Paul showing us how we can channel this whooping that we have inside of us into helping others experience this love as well. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Keep rolling tape and let's keep going here on live for you guys. You got some Reach 3 cards on your table. We do these from time to time. The third question in the discussion relates to that this morning but you probably have a Larry or two out there or some other people. So either renew the men that you have, your thoughts about or maybe add a different man. Just ask God to make you inconsolable for the soul of that man. Just ask God to make you inconsolable for one man. That's all. That would be a great place to start. I was thinking where do you start, where do you start.

Just ask God to make you feel inconsolable, like you can't be happy anymore unless this person knows what you know about Jesus. Of course what happens then is up to him. Also, you have a testimony elevator worksheet, there, a three minute testimony. We'll let that be part of the application for next week. Wanted to get it to you this week and some of you may want to do a little homework. Have I ever asked you to do any homework before? Oh, I have, okay.