

# DM

DEACON MAGAZINE® Spring 2020

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LEADERS  
IN THE  
CHURCH

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. The 2000 statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* is our doctrinal guideline.

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**From One Leader to Another** *by* Mark Dance

## Evangelism — *The Legacy of* Deacons



I LOVE THE FACT that two of the first catalytic Christians in history were deacons. The first martyr after the resurrection was Stephen, and the first missionary after the resurrection was Philip. Deacon Philip (not the apostle Philip) went into missionary mode when he started evangelizing Samaritans. Shortly thereafter, he led an Ethiopian official to Christ and baptized him without the assistance of a pastor. Then, on the way back to Jerusalem, Philip

evangelized Philistines in Azotus.

I've been a pastor for three decades, so may I say on behalf of pastors worldwide that we would all love to serve alongside deacons like Philip.

Evangelism is the legacy of every deacon, which is why this whole issue will resonate deep within the core of your calling.

The growth of the first century church was due in large part not only to deacons but other lay leaders as well. Gospel seeds and churches were planted for the most part by "Joes," not pros.

Many 21<sup>st</sup> century deacons are blazing new mission trails, especially in churches that turn them loose to use their gifts. These deacon trailblazers do not confuse their ordination with their commissioning, because they know that every Christian is a commissioned missionary/evangelist.

God is still calling "Philips" out of their pews and into the white harvest fields. Thank you for investing time and money in this special evangelism edition of *Deacon Magazine*.

Now, go change the world! 🌍

*Mark Dance*

DR. MARK DANCE  
DIRECTOR, LIFEWAY PASTORS

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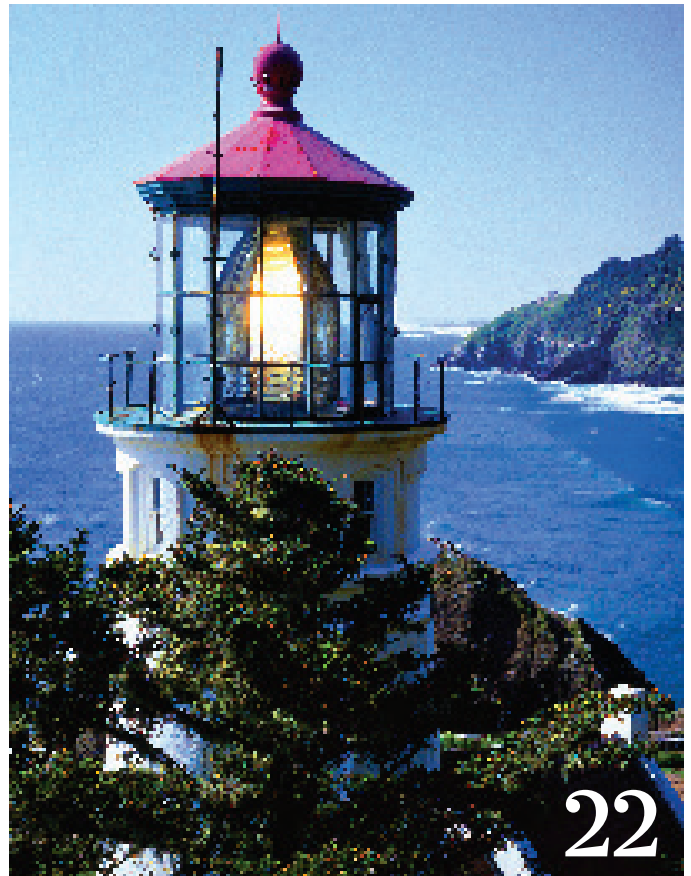
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# *He Was a Deacon Before He Was a Deacon*

**When a Heart of Service is Not  
Tied to an Official Title**

*by* DARYL CROUCH

**U**NASSUMING AS HE WAS, Charlie walked into my office with a noticeable sense of clarity and determination to serve homeless men in our community. That was great, but I was new to this church that was limping along, barely paying our bills, and in real need of

leaders who would reach our community for Christ.

As much as I appreciated his compassion for the vulnerable, I really needed Charlie to give his time, energy, and influence to grow his small group. Charlie had served our church in various capacities through years of tumult, so I respected him greatly, but I really didn't understand how we could pursue his vision and mine at the same time. So my response to his plan was kind, but cool. I assumed I would never hear anything else about it.





## God had been preparing several men to serve, but at the top of the list was Charlie.

was already doing in our people long before I arrived.

Although I was still a bit reluctant, we launched our partnership with a local ministry called Room in the Inn, which allowed us to serve 10 homeless men one night each month. It was a small start, but immediately Charlie's small group jumped in to provide transportation, cook incredible meals, wash clothes, and share Jesus as they hosted these men overnight. The ministry was not only a success because of the men we served, but because of how many people of all ages and backgrounds eventually joined in to serve the mission of God in this growing ministry as we showed and shared Jesus with these precious souls.

Charlie demonstrated humility about what God placed on his heart, genuine love for lost people, kindness to me as the new guy figuring things out, and readiness to actually do the work God had called him to do.

As God continued to rebuild our congregation's health, we soon began the work of reestablishing our

deacon ministry. God had been preparing several men to serve, but at the top of the list was Charlie. He was a deacon long before he was ever a deacon. His heart of service was not tied to an official position or title. Instead, our church set him apart as a deacon because as a follower of Jesus he had already served with a track record of loving God, loving his family, loving his church, and loving his neighbors.

So how did we pursue Charlie's vision and mine? As it turned out, God used Charlie's hard work, gracious disposition, and worthy character not only to mobilize dozens of church members to serve homeless men in Jesus' name, but to help this one pastor see and embrace a kingdom vision that has set a course for our church's ministry for years to come. @

**Daryl Crouch** has pastored Green Hill Church in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, since 2012. He's a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to his high school sweetheart, Deborah, and they have four children.

In the months that followed, our church family worked hard to create significant worship experiences, rebuild our preschool and children's ministry, get on a firm financial footing, and faithfully share Jesus with our neighbors. Progress was slow but steady.

And then Charlie returned to my office, this time with a game plan in place to rally his small group to serve homeless men in our community. During the months since

his first visit, I began to notice that baked into the DNA of our congregation was an eagerness to serve our community in practical ways. We valued biblical preaching, we worshiped with full hearts, we loved one another, but like championship racehorses waiting for the starting gate to open, our church was poised to love our neighbors in practical ways. It turns out God was using Charlie to show me the heart of our church, to demonstrate what God



## Being God's Man by Michael Kelley

# A MAN LIKE ANDREW

**W**HEN WAS THE LAST TIME you had to purchase a car? For many people, doing so is an uncomfortable experience. There can be a lot of pressure walking around a car lot, doing test drives, and then sitting in an office with a salesperson who goes back and forth to check with his manager on the finer points of negotiation.

“What do I have to do to put you behind that wheel today?” or something similar.

A lot of that discomfort comes in knowing that for the salesperson, no matter how good at small talk they may be, their chief goal is to close the deal.

That's how many Christians view evangelism, except they're not the ones sitting in the chair trying to get the best price; they're the salesperson who is doing everything they can to move a person from point A to point B, closing the “faith deal” with a prayer.

The early disciple Andrew stands against this philosophy. It's not that Andrew wasn't passionate about sharing his faith with others; he certainly was. Virtually every time we see him in the New Testament he is introducing someone to Jesus. That's the key difference — Andrew knew the true power of evangelism came not with persuasive arguments but by simply providing an introduction to Jesus. He is more than capable of doing the convincing on His own.

The first time we met Andrew, though, he was following John the Baptist. He was one of two disciples who were there when John made his testimony that Jesus was “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). That statement was enough for Andrew and his companion. While they had been followers of John the



Baptist, they abruptly changed course and began to follow Jesus. These verses tell us that Andrew, along with another man, spent several hours with Jesus and emerged with a life-changing confession: “We have found the Messiah!” (John 1:41).

Let's not miss the gravity of this statement. Generation upon generation had passed, all waiting on the chosen one from God, the Messiah. The people had come to believe that this Messiah would be a political leader God would raise up to throw off the Roman oppression the people were living under. Like Moses who God used to deliver the people from their servitude in Egypt, so the Messiah would deliver the people from Rome and re-establish Israel as a national power. At this point, Andrew didn't know that he, like everyone else, wasn't grasping God's true intentions — that the Messiah would not deliver the people in a political way. He would do something far better. Rather than saving the people from Rome, He would save the people from their sin and death. And rather than being the King of Israel, He would be the King of the universe.

Nevertheless, the first thing Andrew did when he knew he had found Jesus was to go to his brother, Peter, and invite him to come and see Jesus also. In fact, most every time we see Andrew in the New Testament, he is doing this same thing — inviting other people to see Jesus.



The first thing Andrew did when he knew he had found Jesus was to go to his brother, Peter, and invite him to come and see Jesus also. In fact, most every time we see Andrew in the New Testament, he is doing this same thing — inviting other people to see Jesus.


There is no clever pitch; there is no persuasive argument; there is just a simple invitation for Peter to come and encounter Jesus for himself. There is a sweet kind of freedom visible in Andrew's actions. It's the kind of freedom we would hope to have as Christians. But in order to feel that freedom of invitation, two things must be true about us:

**1 We must sincerely love those closest to us.** This might seem like it goes without saying, but if we are to invite people closest to us to Jesus, we must truly love them. Love goes beyond emotion; it is the genuine, heartfelt desire for someone's good. This causes us to ask the question regarding those relationships: What is truly the best thing for an individual? Without exception,



the best thing is Jesus. They might not know it; they might not even like it. But if we truly love those closest to us, then we are responsible to invite them to encounter that which is for their eternal good.

**2 We must believe that Jesus is truly compelling.** Sometimes we are hesitant to talk about Jesus to those closest to us. Other times, we feel the pressure to make sure we have just the right presentation when we do talk to them. But Andrew felt neither of these things. He purely, and simply, invited Peter to encounter Jesus for himself. This is because, based on his own encounter with Jesus, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was truly compelling on His own. There was no need for a clever presentation or sales job; there was only a need to make an introduction, and then Peter would see for himself too.

This was, and is, the invitation of Jesus after all. As we seek to introduce others to the grace and peace we know through Christ, we find Jesus with the same invitation He offered those very first followers: “Come and you’ll see” (John 1:39). 

**Michael Kelley** is director of Groups Ministry for LifeWay Christian Resources. He lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with his wife and three kids. Among other books, he is the author of *Growing Down: Unlearning the Patterns of Adulthood That Keep Us from Jesus* (B&H Publishing, 2018).





# LOVE THE STRANGERS IN YOUR MIDST

by JOE MCKEEVER

**A** S A CAREER member of the United States Coast Guard, Lee Andrews and his wife, Dottie, knew firsthand from various assignments around the country what it meant to be new in town and a stranger in church.

Lee Andrews is one of my favorite deacons because he turned that experience of being a stranger into a means of reaching people for Christ.

I believe one of the most effective means of reaching people for Christ is hospitality evangelism. God told Israel to love the strangers within their midst, because “you were strangers in Egypt” (Lev. 19:34, ESV). That is, you know what it’s like to be an outsider. You know how it feels.

Lee was a native of California. He had moved to Connecticut to attend the Coast Guard Academy and was living in New Orleans when I became his

family’s pastor. He had completed 20 years with the Coast Guard then went to work for a petroleum company.

His wife, Dottie, was a warm-hearted “Connecticut Yankee” whom Lee had met while attending the Coast Guard Academy. We ordained Lee as a deacon during my New Orleans pastorate and honored ourselves in choosing such a fine man.

Lee and Dottie shared a gift for hospitality. Their home was often filled with the happy sounds of friends both new and old whom they invited to their home for dinner. Every Sunday, before and after worship services, they would walk around greeting people, chatting with them, looking for those who were “lost.” In this case, “lost” refers to people who looked out of place and were obviously new to the church. As they got acquainted, soon Lee would issue his invitation.

“Dottie and I would be honored if you folks would join us for lunch at

the cafeteria up the street after church today.” Very few turned down that invitation. A free meal with some extremely friendly people!

Many times my wife and I would be in the same restaurant when Lee would come over to our table. “Pastor, there are some people over here I’d love for you to meet.” He would introduce me to every person around the table, and we would visit briefly.

As their pastor for a full decade, I would estimate that fully one-half to two-thirds of those Lee and Dottie took to lunch ended up joining our church and becoming faithful members.

As a result of this ministry, Lee and Dottie knew everyone in church, and everyone knew them. They were the perfect roving hosts for the Sunday services.

When Lee retired, he and Dottie moved to central Florida. I told our church what they had done through the years and put out a call for someone to fill their shoes. To my knowledge, no one ever did.

My son says, “We Southerners sometimes think we have a corner on hospitality. But these two Northerners showed us a few things.” My suspicion is that their spirit of love and openness had less to do with geography than with the Spirit of Christ within them.

Giving up your Sunday lunch time is inconvenient. Buying lunch for others can get expensive. But what an investment!

“Don’t neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it.” (Heb. 13:2). “Above all, maintain constant love for one another ... Be hospitable to one another without complaining” (1 Pet. 4:9). 🙏

**Joe McKeever** has been saved more than 60 years, has been preaching more than 50 years, has been drawing cartoons for Baptist publications for more than 40 years, and has been retired from pastoring for more than 10 years. These days, he spends his time writing books, taking every preaching invitation coming his way, holding deacon training retreats, and cartooning for the Baptist Press.



## SOUNDBITES



### Walk Humbly Before God

As part of the American Bible Society and Barna Research's State of the Bible 2019, respondents were given five prominent

biblical commands and asked which one was the most important. Out of the options, American Bible users were most likely to choose "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God," taken from Micah 6:8.

Source: americanbible.org

### 3 Ways to Cultivate a Congregation That Exercises Faith

- 1** Challenge people to give as an act of worship and trust in God's provision.
- 2** Point to specific ministry and mission opportunities, and encourage participation.
- 3** Give a platform for individuals in the church to share how they learned to exercise faith.

Source: Lynn Pryor, Factsandtrends.net

**Christians say the Bible is God's Word, but even among Protestant churchgoers only a third spend time reading it every day.**

Source: Lifewayresearch.net



### Blessed Are the Peacemakers

When asked which outcomes characterize real forgiveness, married individuals are

significantly more likely than others to prioritize peacemaking. Six out of 10 married respondents (61%) say that not seeking punishment or retribution is a key element of forgiveness, while half of those who have never been married (51%) agree.

Source: Barna.org

**When it comes to trusting God, Protestant churchgoers exercise a great deal of faith in their daily lives — whether in difficult circumstances or when the unexplainable happens.**

Source: Lifewayresearch.net

### Spontaneous Givers

**5X** Younger generations are almost five times more likely than Boomers and Elders to say their recent financial giving experiences were spontaneous rather than planned. For example, roughly one-third of Gen Z (35%) and Millennial (32%) practicing Christians characterizes their recent giving as completely spontaneous, compared to only 7 percent of Elders. The reverse was true for Elders; about one-third (34%) says their recent giving was purely planned.

Source: Barna.org







# Who's Your ONE



**F**OR MORE THAN 25 years, my favorite Bible passage on evangelism has been Psalm 126:6: “Though one goes along weeping, carrying the bag of seed, he will surely come back with shouts of joy, carrying his sheaves.”

I see this passage as both a principle and a promise. I have often said a seed in a basket will not produce a harvest. We must sow the good gospel seed. We are at a time in history where we as Southern Baptists must prayerfully, intentionally, and spiritually become more fit at our great commission assignment. If we will sow the seed, our Lord will give the increase.

Pastor J.D. Greear of The Summit Church and I have teamed up to make much of personal soul-winning. In his role as our Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president and in my role serving the North American Mission Board, we have been challenging Southern Baptist pastors to lead the way in personal evangelism. I have always believed that whatever is important to the pastor will be important to the people we lead. It has been said that you can't

lead people you don't influence. As leaders, we must influence our people to share their faith as they follow us in leading the way.

“Who's Your ONE?” is a simple, biblical model that is easy to get our minds and hearts around. When Andrew met Jesus, he went out and found his ONE as a priority. Andrew's ONE was his brother Simon Peter. Andrew touched ONE but Andrew's ONE touched thousands.

What if every Christian asked the Lord to put one unbeliever upon his heart and then love that ONE? What if even 10 percent of Southern Baptists believed God for ONE? I believe we could see more baptisms than any given year in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I believe God will use Southern Baptist deacons as they are servant leaders and servant models in sharing their faith.

In fact, the invitation decision counseling at First Baptist Church Woodstock, where I pastored for 33 years, is served by our deacons. All of us are called to serve, however, the very word *deacon* means servant. What better way to serve the Lord than to share the good news that Jesus has deposited in us?

## A Call for Deacons to Model a Concern for the Lost

by  
**JOHNNY  
HUNT**

We stand in dire need of helping our church leaders such as pastors and deacons display the priority of evangelism like Andrew. Deacons, let's join hands and hearts together to make much of King Jesus! I am all in. Join me as I join Him.

What would it look like to see the Lord begin a movement of "Who's Your ONE?"

To begin with, every attending church member would be asked to pray about a friend, relative, work associate, classmate, or neighbor they would list as their ONE. They would then begin to pray daily for his or her salvation and would ask the Lord to open opportunities to share the gospel with their ONE.

Let me make this challenge clearer. Approximately 5,220,000 Southern Baptists attend church weekly. If 10 percent of our attenders led one person to Christ in 2020, we would baptize over 500,000 people. That would be more than twice what we baptized in 2018 and more than Southern Baptists have ever baptized. This will never happen until we begin to prioritize evangelism again in our denomination.

One of my favorite Bible passages is found in Acts 8 where the Lord is using Philip, a deacon in the city of Samaria. Even though Philip's evangelistic work that was happening there was important, the Lord calls Philip away to head south into Gaza in order to tell one Ethiopian man about Jesus. The Lord laid on Philip's heart to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with one person (see Acts 8:26-40). This passage serves as a beautiful picture of Philip's obedience to God's call to his ONE. There are many good things deacons can do here and now, but there



**All of us are called to serve, however, the very word *deacon* refers to a servant. What better way to serve the Lord than to share the good news that Jesus has deposited in us?**

is nothing more important than leading others to faith in Christ. The Bible says Philip "opened his mouth" and preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:35, KJV). There is a dire need for us to open our mouths and speak of Jesus.

Philip was used by the Lord to touch ONE. However, only heaven will reveal how many the Ethiopian man touched in his country. Maybe it's a good time to ask some simple and direct questions:

*When was the last time you felt a personal burden to share the gospel with one specific person?*

*When did you last sense that the Lord laid on your heart to share the gospel with one person?*

I want to encourage you to pause now, bow your head, and ask God for His ONE for you. Think for a moment, what might happen in the next 12 months of your life. It's possible that your ONE could come to Christ soon. Then, while your heart is hot for soul-winning, the Lord will burden you with another. Again, only heaven knows what could happen. But one thing is for sure, we would be transformed and changed in our hearts.

What are you waiting for? Answer this question now. "Who's Your

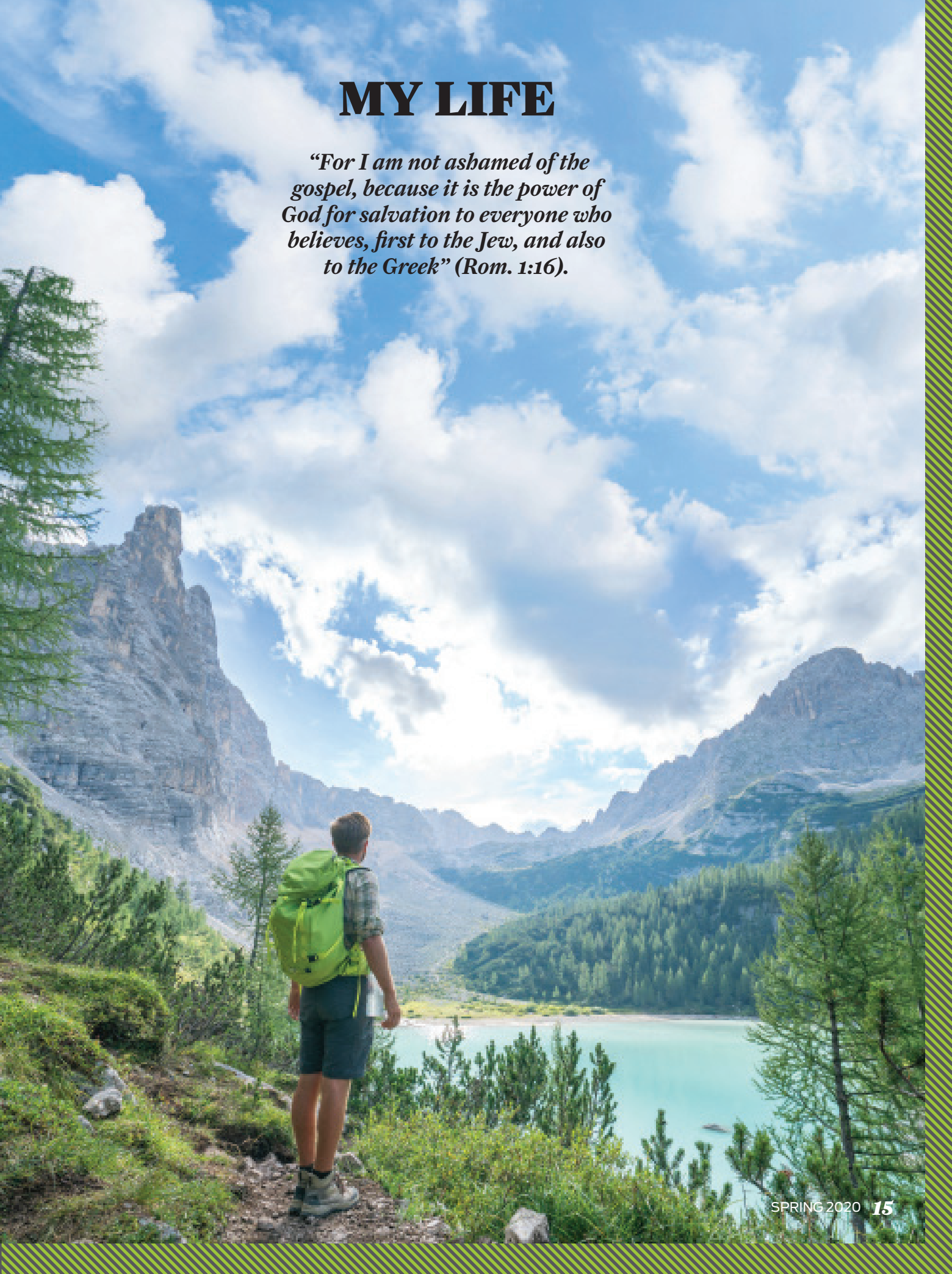
ONE?" The Lord will impress your ONE on your heart. Now begin to pray. Then look for the opportunity God gives you to love that person and share the good news. Deacons can be difference-makers! 🙏

**Johnny Hunt** is senior vice president of evangelism and leadership at the North American Mission Board. He was senior pastor at First Baptist Church Woodstock in Georgia for 33 years. Learn more about the "Who's Your ONE?" challenge at [whosyourone.com](http://whosyourone.com).



# MY LIFE

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).*

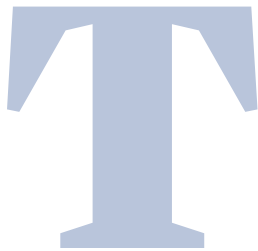


# KNOWING *Your Faith* *to be Bold in Your Faith*



## The Importance of Biblical and Theological Literacy for Evangelism

by ADAM GROZA



THE POEM “THE BRIDGE” in Shel Silverstein’s classic book *Where the Sidewalk Ends* describes a bridge that will only get you halfway to where you want to go. When it comes to evangelism, Christians often have a desire to share the gospel, but desire without knowl-

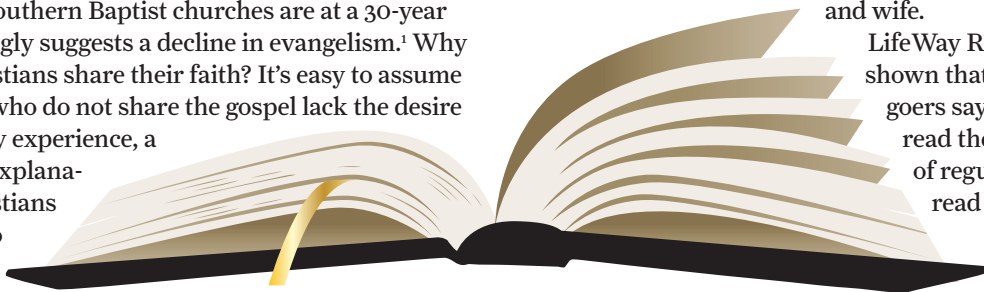
edge will only get you halfway to where you want to go. Cultivating the habit of evangelism requires something more than compassion, desire, passion, or good intentions — evangelism requires knowledge. More specifically, in order to *share* the message of the Bible with others, you must first *know* the message of the Bible.

Baptisms in Southern Baptist churches are at a 30-year low, which strongly suggests a decline in evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Why don’t more Christians share their faith? It’s easy to assume that Christians who do not share the gospel lack the desire to witness. In my experience, a more plausible explanation is that Christians have the *desire* to share their

faith, but they lack the *ability* to share their faith. By ability, I do not mean that they lack a program or script. The 21<sup>st</sup> century church has more access to evangelistic material, resources, and programs than at any other point in human history. What the church lacks today are Christians who have both a desire to share the gospel and sufficient knowledge of the Bible to be evangelistically effective.

Evangelism in an increasingly post-Christian nation requires a greater knowledge of the Bible. The average person lacks basic knowledge of the Bible, a condition known as biblical illiteracy. A Barna poll revealed that 12% of people polled think Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife, 82% of people think “God helps those who help themselves” is a verse in the Bible (it’s not), and 50% think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.

LifeWay Research has shown that 1 in 5 churchgoers say they have never read the Bible. Only 45% of regular churchgoers read the Bible more than once a week.<sup>2</sup>









How well do most Christians really know the story of Bible? Can they articulate key biblical concepts like sin, atonement, repentance, or redemption?

Do they know that the Bible (from beginning to end) points to Jesus or do they read it as a disconnected group of moral stories where they are always the hero and never the villain?

We cannot seriously expect that biblically illiterate Christians will evangelize biblically illiterate non-Christians.

This is not to say that God cannot use new Christians to evangelize. If you know enough to believe then you know enough to share, but the disciples were taught before they were sent. Faith has an incubation period. The gospel is “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16) not our knowledge or intellectual ability. Yet the Bible commends maturity of faith (see Heb. 6:1) and growth in knowledge (see 2 Pet. 3:18 and Phil. 1:9). In the divine economy of evangelism, God uses our knowledge of the Bible to accomplish His will in regard to salvation. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 3:7, it is “only God who gives the growth.”

I was recently at a Denny’s® restaurant in Southern California with the youth group from my church. While there, I noticed a young trucker waiting for his food, and I decided to share the gospel with him. It turns out, the young man was 20 years old and had immigrated from Kenya a decade earlier. He was a devout Muslim, and we sat down for an hour, ate together, and discussed whether or not Jesus was the Son of God who died on the cross. It was a candid, yet warm, conversation.

By contrast, I remember the first time I went witnessing. It was a disaster! I was a college student at a public university and a new believer. A gentleman from the church took me out to share the gospel. Where did he take me? To the Mormon temple in Tempe, Arizona! I had the desire to reach Mormons with the truth of Scripture, but I didn’t know the Scripture nearly as well as the Mormons with whom I spoke. Thankfully, I was able to stick close to my friend and learned a lot in the process.

The difference between my experience at the Mormon temple while I was in college and my recent experience at Denny’s reflects a comfort with evangelism that is primarily

the result of practical experience and knowledge gained in the local church, where pastors and deacons alike taught God’s Word, invited people to believe, and then disciplined them to share the gospel.

Here is the point: We cannot expect Christians to share what they do not know.

In order to get Christians to do the work of evangelism,

**In order to *share* the message of the Bible with others, you must first *know* the message of the Bible.**

we must teach them the Bible. Knowledge of the Bible activates passion and desire for evangelism into action. Christians who feel confident explaining the story of redemption from creation to the cross are more likely to open their mouths at a Denny’s and talk to a stranger about Jesus. More than programs or scripts, knowledge of the

Bible taught in the local church is the best preparation for evangelism and the best apologetic training to deal with questions and objections. A Christian who knows the Bible can be a powerful evangelistic tool in the hands of the Master.

On the other hand, Christians who do not *know* their faith cannot *communicate* their faith. In the place of evangelism, a Christian ignorant of the Bible ends up substituting social programs and charity for gospel proclamation. Handing out water is a wonderful gesture and perhaps a potential evangelistic bridge. However, by itself, it is not evangelism. Evangelism requires communicating the gospel to a point of decision, and this requires knowledge of the gospel.

How can you promote evangelism? Bridge the gap between desire and action by promoting sound Bible teaching. Churches that spend less time worrying about optics and aesthetics and more time on teaching the Bible, modeling evangelism, and equipping passionate Christians with eternal truth are more likely to see new converts enter the waters of baptism. ☞

<sup>1</sup>“Southern Baptist Down to Lowest in 30 Years” by Kate Shellnut in *Christianity Today*, posted online at [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com), May 23, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>“The Epidemic of Bible Illiteracy in Our Churches” by Ed Stetzer in *Christianity Today*, posted online at [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com), July 6, 2015.

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# THE 7 MOST DANGEROUS WORDS IN EVANGELISM

*3 Reasons to Consider Dropping a Well-worn Cliché From Gospel Presentations*

by AARON WILSON

**G**ROWING UP IN THE BIBLE BELT, I heard many gospel presentations during my childhood. So much so, that by the time I was 8, I knew the following phrases by heart:

- All have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God.

- While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.
- Now, all you have to do is ...

Now, of course, one of these things is not like the other.

While the first three sayings come from Scripture, the latter is a man-made cliché that often pops up in gospel presentations.

Nevertheless, that phrase was recited to me so often as a child, I gathered it made up the text of John 3:17. I assumed the gospel that begins with, “For God so loved the world ...” concluded with, “Now, all you have to do is ...”

I’m eternally grateful for every person who shared the gospel with me growing up and believe the people who used this seven-word call-to-action with me did so with good intentions. But while the phrase, “Now, all you have to do is ...” aims to highlight the vital truth that redemption is complete in Christ, I believe it actually serves as an unhelpful — and, at times, even dangerous — Christian catchphrase.

Here are three reasons to consider dropping the well-worn cliché from gospel presentations.

## 1 It Sets the Stage for Minimal Discipleship.

THE PHRASE, “ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ...” often transitions the redemptive narrative — a story grounded in history — to the present-day imperative to repent and believe. Such a transition is needed as it answers

the question the gospel originally evoked among the crowd at Pentecost: “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

The “all you have to do” response, however, is dangerous in that it establishes a nominal understanding of what discipleship entails — an approach that runs in stark contrast to how Jesus presented His gospel.

Instead of laying out a minimal threshold for discipleship, Christ always raised people’s expectations of what it means to be His follower. Rather than telling potential disciples, “Here’s all you have to do,” He presented difficult sayings such as:

- You must hate your family and your own life (Luke 14:26).
- You must carry your cross daily (Luke 14:27).
- You cannot put your hand to the plow and look back (Luke 9:62).
- You will be hated for my name’s sake (Matthew 10:22).
- You must lose your life because of me (Matthew 16:25).

There are even parts of Scripture where it seems Jesus is trying to discourage people from following Him (Matthew 8:18-22, Luke 9:57-62). But Jesus wasn’t being discouraging; He was instead asking people to deeply consider what it means to be His follower and commanding them to count the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33).

Given these biblical warnings and commands, is it really helpful to tell people, “Here’s all you have to do for Jesus?” Shouldn’t evangelists rather say: “There are weighty reasons to not become a Christian. Your life will be far easier in this world if you keep to the course you’re already on. But if you want to know truth, live for the purpose you were created for, and gain eternal life, Christ’s gospel is offered as a free gift.”

The kind of discipleship that perseveres over time flows from a commitment to truth, not an easy life filled with minimal expectations and demands.

## 2 It Creates Confusion About Salvation.

IN A 2013 INTERVIEW, J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., and current president of the Southern Baptist Convention, spoke to “assurance issues” in evangelical churches and why clarity is important when sharing the gospel.

Greear alluded to the number of people who, “pray a sinner’s prayer and think they’re going to heaven because of it, even though there’s not a detectable difference in their lifestyles from those outside the church.”

Such confusion about conversion is fueled by phrases like “all you have to do ...” As a result, people living in long-term, unrepentant sin, may claim to be saved because, “I was told all I had to do was pray a prayer and I prayed it.”

While salvation is a free gift, true faith is marked by a new life that bears fruit for God’s Kingdom (James 2:18). Lowering expectations of discipleship by saying, “here’s all you have to do” often creates false assumptions for people to think they expressed saving faith merely because they signed a card or walked an aisle.

It’s true that God wants His people to have a firm assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:13). This assurance, however, comes from the sufficiency of Christ and one’s posture toward the gospel — not a one-time event marketed as a low-cost ticket into the Kingdom of God.

## 3 It Makes the Gospel Sound like Commercialism.

“BUT WAIT, THERE’S MORE ...”

“Order now, and we’ll throw in ...”

“With just five easy payments of ...”

“All you have to do is pick up the phone ...”

Statements like these are trademark pitches infomercials use in an attempt to close their must-have deals by appealing to a sense of urgency and ease. Unfortunately, similar language of the “now, all you have to do ...” variety can also creep into gospel presentations so that, in an attempt to communicate free grace, Christians actually broadcast cheap grace.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer highlighted this danger in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*:

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship ...

“Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.”

Unlike Bonhoeffer’s imagery, the compelling nature of infomercials is specifically tailored to keep people from counting an offer’s cost. Christians should never feel the need to pad the gospel message entrusted to them by borrowing gimmicky language from TV.

## But Really, Here Are the Most Dangerous Words.

LET ME CLARIFY that the most dangerous words in evangelism are actually ones that are never said — it’s better to stumble through the gospel than to never share it in the first place.

This doesn’t mean, however, that Christians shouldn’t develop the ability to proclaim the good news with theological precision. The Church should readily preach salvation by faith alone while also clearly communicating the biblical response to Jesus’ gospel — belief and repentance.

But let’s refrain from saying, “Now, all you have to do is believe and repent.” If Christ is to be taken seriously, we should prepare straight-and-narrow travelers for hardships along the way.

In this manner, those who count the cost of discipleship will be prepared to not turn back when the going gets tough. 🙏

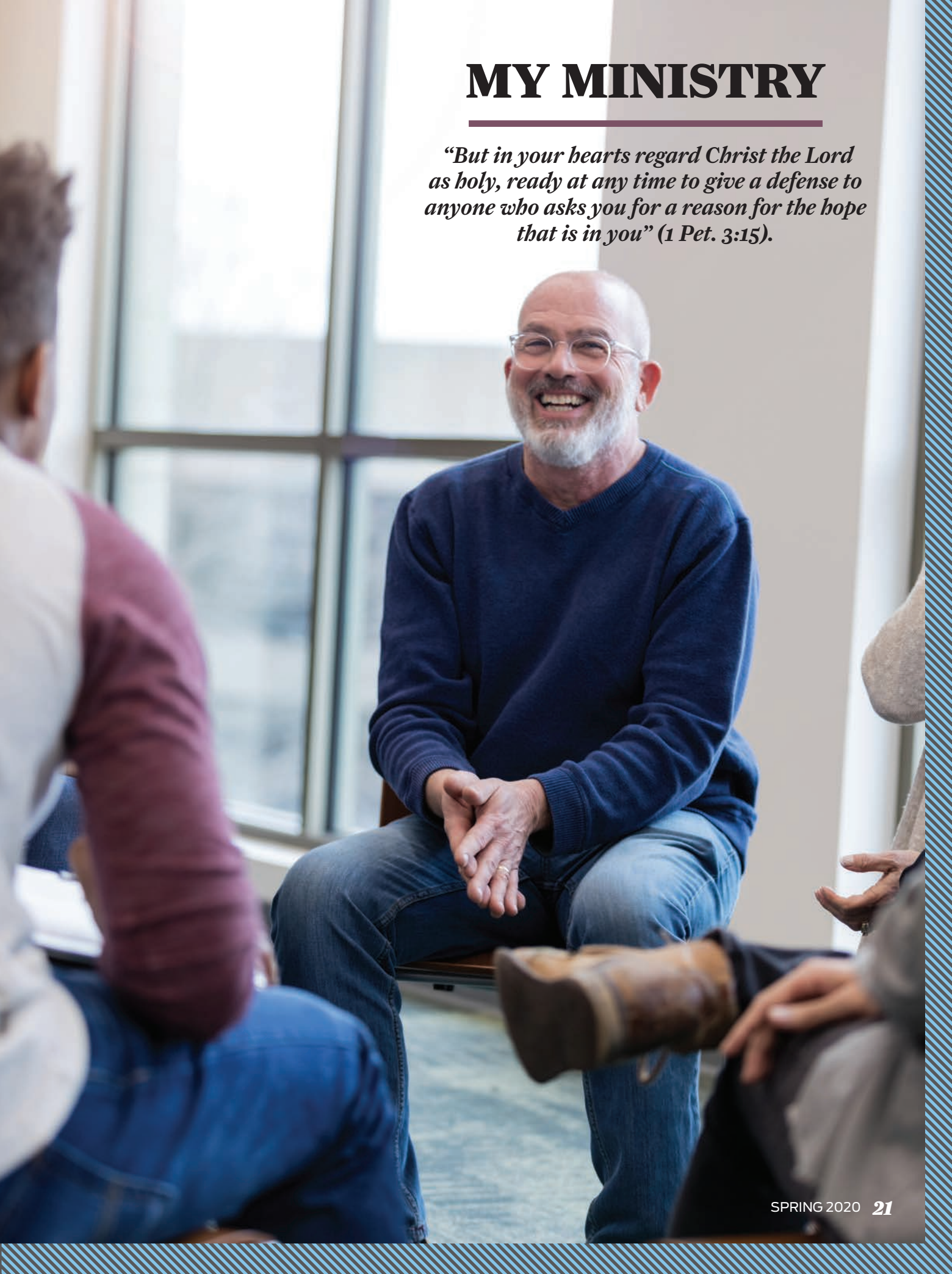
**Aaron Wilson** (@AaronBWilson26) is associate editor for Facts & Trends where this article originally appeared. Used by permission.



# MY MINISTRY

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*“But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15).*







# Everyday Evangelism

## How to Use What You Already Know to Tell Others About Jesus

by MATT QUEEN

**S**TEPHEN, PHILIP, PROCHORUS, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus comprised the first seven deacons of the early church (see Acts 6:5). Other than describing Stephen as “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” and Nicolaus as “a convert from Antioch” (Acts 6:5), the New Testament provides little, if any, information concerning the identity of these men before they were selected by the apostles and affirmed by the Jerusalem church as deacons. Of these seven men, most Christians recall Stephen and Philip as

the most well-known of the deacons in Acts not because of who they were but because of what they did. The best-known deacons preached the best news ever.

Today’s deacons should be known for practicing evangelism just as Stephen and Philip were known for evangelizing in the first century. Unfortunately, many deacons have convinced themselves either

because they have not been certified in evangelism training or because they have trouble memorizing a gospel presentation that they cannot evangelize every day. However, neither Stephen nor Philip were ever certified in an evangelism training program; and inasmuch as Luke faithfully recorded their gospel presentations in Acts, nothing

**Every  
believer can  
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anyone.**

indicates that they memorized a gospel script before they evangelized the Sanhedrin (see Acts 6:11-7:60), the Samaritans (see Acts 8:4-13), or the Ethiopian official (see Acts 8:26-40). Instead, Stephen and Philip seem to have evangelized by simply telling their hearers what they had been told when they first heard the gospel and believed it.

Every believer, including deacons, can evangelize every day, at any time, with anyone.

A simple way to practice everyday evangelism includes three simple steps: 1) recall the gospel essentials; 2) select Scripture(s) that communicate those gospel essentials; and 3) instruct people to repent of their sins; believe in Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection; and confess Jesus as their Lord.

## 1. Recall the Gospel Essentials.

WHAT SPECIFICALLY MUST WE SAY in order to share the entire gospel with unbelievers? Consider Paul's summary of the gospel: "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Paul simply passed on what other believers had told him.

Anyone who knows enough of the gospel to have been saved by it knows enough of the gospel to share it. Conversely, anyone who doesn't know enough of the gospel to share it should ask himself whether or not he has ever heard and believed enough of the gospel to have been saved by it in the first place. Recall the gospel message you heard and believed. At its core, it likely included the reality and consequences of your sin; the truth that Jesus Christ, the God-man, died for your sins, was buried, and raised on the third day; and an invitation that you repent of your sins, believe Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection alone can forgive you; and verbally confess, "Jesus is Lord." Your recollection of the gospel's essential elements is likely similar to the ones just stated; therefore, be confident in the fact that you already know the gospel and can share it naturally with unbelievers who need to hear it.

## 2. Select Scripture(s) that Communicate the Gospel Essentials

WHICH SCRIPTURES COMMUNICATE THESE ESSENTIALS you first heard? And which Scriptures communicated the essentials that at some time led you to belief? The New Testament presents two reasons why the Scriptures must be incorporated in our gospel presentations. First, hearing the message about Christ as recorded in the Scriptures is prerequisite for biblical faith. Paul wrote, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Second, evangelistic proclamations in the New Testament overwhelmingly incorporate the Scriptures (e.g., Luke 24:14-32;

Acts 2:14-41; 3:11-26; 4:1-12; 7; 8:4,35; 13:13-49; 16:25-32; 17:10-13; 18:5,28; 20:27; 26:22-23; 28:23-27).

Likely you can call to mind verses, which in their immediate context and with their intended meaning, communicate the gospel essentials you heard and believed. For example, Romans 3:23 communicates the consequences and reality of sin. First Corinthians 15:3-4 conveys the truth that the God-man Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. Romans 10:9 conveys the gospel's invitation to repent of our sins; believe in both Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection for our salvation; and verbally confess, "Jesus is Lord." With the Spirit's help, select either a verse or a few verses you already know that communicates each of the gospel essentials you earlier identified. Now, utilize these verses in your evangelistic presentation of those gospel essentials.

## 3. Instruct Your Hearers to Repent of Their Sins, Believe in Jesus Christ, and Confess Him as Lord.

CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL INSTRUCT those with whom you share the gospel to repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, and confess Him as Lord. If, after hearing the gospel and being convicted by the Spirit, you are convinced an unbeliever genuinely desires to repent, believe, and confess, then ask him or her to call on God in prayer. Usually an unbeliever does not know what to say to God in order to pray. Therefore, first have him or her articulate in prayer the reason he or she finds himself or herself praying to God. Generally, you are listening for an admission of sinfulness and his or her need for God's forgiveness. Second, instruct him or her to tell God, in his or her own words, what can forgive his or her sins from the gospel essentials you have shared. Listen for references to the essence of the gospel. Third, instruct him or her to confess with sincerity the phrase, "Jesus is Lord." Last, invite him or her to thank God for His forgiveness and love. Usually, new believers will thank God for His forgiveness, His presence, His mercy, and His grace.

These three, simple steps should give you confidence that you can use what you already know and believe, without having to memorize anything new, in order to tell people about Jesus. So instead of being intimidated with some new and unfamiliar way to tell the good news, confidently "tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love!"<sup>1</sup> @

<sup>1</sup>"I Love to Tell the Story" by Kate Hankey. Public domain.

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# 6 PRACTICAL WAYS A DEACON'S WIFE CAN SHARE THE GOSPEL

*Preparing to Share Christ Simply, Naturally, and Effectively*

by DIANA DAVIS

**T**HEY'RE EVERYWHERE! Believe it or not, any deacon's wife is surrounded by opportunities to share Jesus' plan of salvation with people who don't yet know Him. Let's look at six practical ways to share Jesus simply, naturally, and effectively.

**1 Be ready.** A prepared deacon's wife is much more likely to share Jesus. Spend a few minutes to implement some of these preparation tips.

- Mark a small New Testament with Bible verses to explain the gospel. I love "The Roman Road," using verses from Romans to fully explain God's plan.

## Any deacon's wife is surrounded by opportunities to share Jesus' plan of salvation with people who don't yet know Him.



(Google it.) Highlight or underline verses, and write the page number for the next verse at the side. Keep the marked Bible in your handbag, ready to use.

- Order personal calling cards with your contact info on the front and a short gospel summary on the back. Keep the cards in your handbag or pocket. You'll be surprised how often you'll use them to

share Jesus and invite people to church.

- Download the free "Life Conversation Guide" app for sharing the gospel. Our Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) prepared this app as an easy and clear witnessing tool, complete with Scriptures and video. Familiarize yourself with the app. Use it often.

- Write out your personal Jesus story about how you made Jesus your Savior and the impact He makes in your daily life. Read it aloud, and time it so you can summarize it in a couple of minutes. You can always give more details, but you'll be amazed how often you'll be able to share Jesus when you've prepared.

**2 As you serve in the church, share the gospel.** Many deacons' wives are involved in various ministries. Never assume that people already know Jesus as personal Savior. How can you share Jesus in your ministry? As you help the homeless, share Jesus. If you teach children, share the gospel each Sunday, and visit in each home to share the gospel with parents. As you visit the assisted living center or the homebound, ask about their Jesus story. When you pray with a family at the hospital, pray that every person in that circle will come to know Jesus. Be keenly alert for witness opportunities wherever you serve in the church.

**3 Listen and respond.** When you truly listen, you'll hear constant hints from lost people that they'd like to know your Jesus. If someone says, "You always have such a good attitude," don't just think, "Oh, I'm just a good person." The answer is Jesus. If they ask, "What's going on at your church?" they're likely wishing for an invitation. Even a compliment, such as "There's something special about you," offers a chance to

point to Jesus. In crisis times, you may hear, "I'm not sure I can handle my problems." Listen well. Respond with Jesus.

**4 Share Jesus with church guests.** What a concept! God brings lost guests to your church worship service. Could they attend and never hear a personal testimony of salvation? Intentionally find one newcomer each Sunday, welcome her warmly, and make a coffee date to answer her questions about your church and share your personal Jesus story. You'll be amazed how easy and effective this can be.

**5 Plant social media seeds that may open gospel-sharing opportunities.** Any type of social media can be used to point to Jesus. Great days? Thank God. Hard days? Mention the peace God gives you. Post a Scripture. Tell snippets of your Christian testimony. Promise to pray for others' needs. Ask an open question, such as "Survey of my friends: Will I meet you in heaven?" Then be ready to respond. Chat about your exciting church or Bible class. Invite others to join you. Link to your church website or a salvation plan. Allow readers to see how Jesus makes a difference in everyday life. They'll want to know that Jesus.

**6 "Who's Your ONE?"** The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC.net) and the North American Mission Board (NAMB.net) have designed a "Who's Your ONE?" challenge to each Southern Baptist. The challenge is for you to ask who's the one specific person in your life who may not know Jesus personally. Commit to pray for this person and commit to share Jesus with this person during the next few weeks. Even better, you could pick one person from each area of your life outside of church: one relative, one neighbor, one work associate or club member or sports teammate, etc. Pray for your ONES and find a chance to share God's salvation story. You can do this!

Sharing the gospel is a natural part of following God. There's no need to fret, because God provides His power through His Holy Spirit. Do the preparation step today and begin tomorrow to share the gospel — honestly, excitedly, comfortably. Share Jesus as part of your current church ministry. Share Him weekly with a church guest. Use your social media to point to Jesus. And list the ONES already in your life who need God's salvation. Want more inspiration? Read Greg Laurie's wonderful, short book, *Tell Someone* or J.D. Greear's *Above All*.

Now relax, deacon's wife, and intentionally see the numerous witnessing opportunities all around you. Sharing Jesus isn't difficult; it's eternally important. ☺

**Diana Davis** is author of *Deacon Wives (B&H)* and co-author of *Across the Street and Around the World (New Hope)*. [dianadavis.org](http://dianadavis.org).

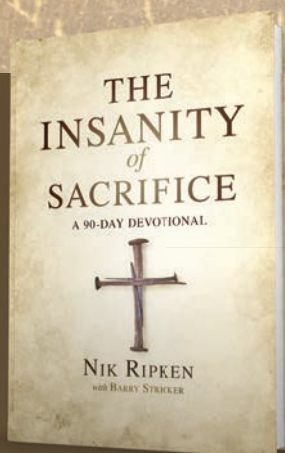


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It's in the BOOKS that we read.  
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who SACRIFICE.*

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WHY?

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# HOW EVERY MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH CAN BE A GOSPEL-SHARING MINISTRY

*5 Practical Tips for Your Church's Ministries*

by DON PUCIK

**S**HE HAD NEVER LIVED in the United States before moving to our town to teach at the high school. She was unfamiliar with our culture. She knew no one. But when someone told her about our church, she was immediately interested in the choir because of her love for singing. Choir members befriended her. They invited her home for Sunday lunches and traditional holiday meals. She listened to the worship leader's devotions at rehearsals and to the preacher's sermons. She was singing Christian songs

and hymns every week. Although in her home country Christianity was suppressed, she soon became convinced that Jesus was the only way to know God. She saw His impact on her choir friends. Several shared the gospel with her, and within a few months, her life was changed forever!

Does this story surprise you? If so, it might be because you've never thought of a choir as a gospel-sharing ministry. But shouldn't every ministry in the church be sharing the gospel?

## Why Every Ministry Matters

MINISTRY OCCURS WHEN WE SERVE OTHERS by meeting needs. In a “perfect” church (and there are no perfect churches), every ministry is conducted by members who possess a sense of God’s call and a clear purpose for their work. When the needs within the church or community change, leaders should carefully consider and pray about the launching of new ministries and the “closing” of others. Ministries that meet real needs matter.

But there’s another reason why every ministry matters in your church. When Jesus preached the gospel, He also ministered to the practical needs of His hearers (see Matt. 4:23-24). For example, He didn’t simply talk about God’s love for people — He demonstrated God’s love for them through His ministry to them. Ministry was the illustration of His message! Understood in this way, the message of the gospel and the ministry of the church are inseparable. Every ministry in the church becomes an opportunity to share the gospel.

## How Every Ministry Can Be a Gospel-Sharing Ministry

WHAT MINISTRIES ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH in your church? Whether you greet people, work in the nursery, teach a class, or sing in the choir, God has placed you in a vital ministry that has the supernatural potential to help others come to know and trust Jesus for salvation. How can you be a part of what God is doing through the ministries of your church?

**Pray.** Slow down and begin this journey by renewing your fellowship with the Lord. James encouraged us to “draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (Jas. 4:8). As we spend time with Him, God’s presence begins to affect our hearts, and our hearts begin to align with His. Moved with compassion for the lost, Jesus taught His followers to ask the Father “to send out workers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38). The Father “sends” those whose hearts have been touched with the same compassion Jesus has for the lost. Pray also with others involved in your ministry area, asking the Lord to give you opportunities to share the gospel.

**Trust.** Evangelism can be scary. We fear not knowing what to say — or worse — saying the wrong thing. Jesus never intended that we serve Him in our own strength. In fact, He said, “you can do nothing without Me” (John 15:5). He is not counting on you to produce results. He is calling you to rest in Him (Matt. 11:28-29; John 15:4-5). Trust Him.

**Learn.** Become a student of the gospel message so you can respond to someone asking the question, “How can I be saved?” Your focus should be on the content of the gospel and not on a technique. No one is going to be saved by your carefully memorized presentation but by the power that resides in the simple message of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18). Consider asking your pastor to lead a basic evangelism training session for all ministry leaders.

**Connect.** As you serve in the church, notice the people God brings into your area of ministry. Greet them warmly. Try to learn their names and identify their family members. Invite them to sit with you in worship services or to join you at lunch. Every effort you make to connect with someone can potentially create many new and unexpected opportunities for spiritual conversations!

**Care.** Luke made a powerful observation about Jesus when he wrote that “all the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him” (Luke 15:1). Why did so many secular and irreligious people feel so drawn to Jesus? They felt loved and cared for when they were around Him. They wanted to hear anything and everything He had to say! Similarly, as we genuinely care for the hard-to-love personalities God brings near to us, He will give us remarkable opportunities to share the gospel.

What happened to the young woman who was saved through the choir ministry? When the school year ended, she returned to her home country. As a fearless and vibrant witness for Christ, she was able to lead her parents and others in her family to the Lord. Notice that she didn’t connect with all the ministries of our church ... just one. But it was enough, because it was a gospel-sharing ministry! ☺

For further reading:

*Tell Someone: You Can Share the Good News* by Greg Laurie. Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2016.

*Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright. Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2016.

**Don Pucik** serves as mission strategist for the churches of the Northshore Baptist Association in Covington, Louisiana. Parents of six and grandparents to two, Don and his wife, Gail, have been married for 38 years.



# SHARING YOUR FAITH AT HOME

*Your family wants to know what you believe.*

by STEVE HOUSER

**A**RE YOU COMFORTABLE sharing the gospel with others? Do you love to see brothers and sister grow in their walk with Christ? Do you hope that God will use you to make an impact for His kingdom? There is one place God has equipped you to have the greatest impact — in your home.

I often receive calls from families who are hoping to check out our church. Often these families have recently moved

into our area and want to ask a few questions to “feel out” our church and especially its pastor. As we talk, it becomes clear that the parents are focused on finding a church that will teach biblically and challenge their family spiritually.

As a pastor, I love getting these calls. Not only does it allow me to talk about our church, but it also shows commitment on the part of the family. They are invested beyond simply “showing up.” The type of parent who calls ahead to ask questions is the type of parent who is concerned about



the faithfulness of the message their family will be hearing. They will be paying attention to the sermon, possibly taking notes, maybe even engaging their children in discussion on the way home.

## Spiritually Leading Your Family

LEADING YOUR FAMILY SPIRITUALLY does not have to be a complicated; it is, however, very important. It is worth a call to a prospective church, and it is worth investing in a local body of believers where your family can be challenged and encouraged. As deacons and servant leaders in the church, we have already committed to spending energy serving our local body and caring for members of our church family. The question is, do we give the same amount of effort and energy to lead spiritually in our own homes?

Christians know that the message of the gospel is good news for those who hear and believe, but oftentimes Christian parents leave it up to the church to share the good news with their family. If we neglect to share our faith at home, we are neglecting our family's only hope. We cannot be idle or forget our purpose. The gospel is too good, and our family's need is too great; for "how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

## Live YOUR Faith

WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP in our homes, we can only share with our family what we have received ourselves. If we do not have a vibrant and active faith in Christ, how can we expect to teach our family what it means to have a vibrant and active faith? The quickest way to lead our family toward hypocrisy or dissatisfaction with religion is to live life that is inconsistent with the faith we proclaim.

There are too many documented cases of church leaders, elders, and deacons neglecting the faith of their family for the sake of service to their church or outreach to the community. True church leaders understand that their calling begins in their home before it ever spills out to the church.

Whether we ask for it or not, the depth of our faith will impact the faith of our spouse and children. This means that spiritual leadership in our home begins with spiritually leading our own hearts. When we learn to deeply trust Christ and feed our souls with the truth from His Word,

**There are many other people who have written countless words that enrich the soul and lead people to deeper faith in Christ, yet it is you who tops the list as the most important spiritual voice for your family.**

the result is an authentic and rooted faith. The kind of faith we want to see in our own family.

## Share YOUR Faith

THERE ARE MANY OTHER PEOPLE (excellent pastors and theologians) who have written countless words that enrich the soul and lead people to deeper faith in Christ, yet it is you who tops the list as the most important spiritual voice for your

family. Your family wants to know what you believe, they long to hear what stirs your affections, and they delight to know what gives you hope. Maybe the most important thing you can do to spiritually lead your family is to share your beliefs, passions, and hopes with them.

There are many ways to share your faith with your family, and here are five ideas to get you started.

- 1 Tell your family the story of your salvation.** Who shared the gospel with you? How did you come to believe it? How did it change your life?
- 2 Set a time that you sit down with your family to do family worship.** Let them see your heart for the Lord and spend time training them about the beauty of the gospel.
- 3 Create in your home an open conversation about faith.** Do not shy away from questions. Search the Scriptures together for answers to their questions.
- 4 Be open about the times you are struggling, and let your family in on the moments where God is meeting you.** Pour out your soul, and let them see where God has mended it.
- 5 Serve your community together.** Invite people into your home, and love them the way Christ loves them.

May the Lord be pleased to use us as we take seriously our role as spiritual leaders, especially in our homes. ☺

**Steve Houser** and his wife, Sarah, have been living and serving in South Korea for 10 years. They have four children. Steve is serving as the English pastor for Songtan Central Baptist Church in Songtan and is also a writer and speaker for "Bring it Home Family Discipleship." Learn more at [justbringithome.com](http://justbringithome.com).

# Jesus

JESUS CHRIST WAS WITH GOD THE FATHER before the world was created. He became human and lived among humanity as Jesus of Nazareth. He came to show us what God the Father is like. He lived a sinless life, showing us how to live; and He died upon a cross to pay for our sins. God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus is the source of eternal life. Jesus wants to be the doorway to new life for you. In the Bible, He was called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29). In the Old Testament, sacrifices were made for the sins of the people. Jesus became the sacrificial lamb offered for your sin.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- Admit to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.

- By faith, receive Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.

- Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith. @







# MY CHURCH

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*“For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”  
(1 Cor. 15:3-4).*



# What Is The Gospel?

The word *gospel* has been used so commonly for so long that it's become all but stripped of its meaning.

An Excerpt from *Above All: The Gospel Is the Source of the Church's Renewal*

by J.D. GREER





**T**HERE'S GOSPEL-CENTERED preaching, gospel-centered kids Sunday school, gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered tree and shrub removal. Okay, one of those I made up. (Maybe.) But "the gospel" has become shorthand for whatever is important to us in Christianity at the moment. It's also become a label we slap on things to assure newcomers that our church is hip, up-to-date, and theologically-certified. But is that all the gospel has become?

A label?

What does it mean for the gospel to function as the power of God in our churches? If the gospel is truly God's raw power, we had better have it in the right place.

After Paul declares to the Romans that the gospel message is the power of God, he spends ten chapters explaining how the gospel works. We might summarize Paul's chapters by saying the gospel is the good news that:

**The beauty of the  
gospel is that those  
who trust in Jesus  
need never again  
fear alienation  
from God. In Christ  
you are secure.  
In Christ you are  
loved. In Christ you  
are whole. In Christ  
you are chosen. In  
Christ you are pure.**

We were dead in our trespasses and sin.  
Religion couldn't help us.  
New resolutions to change couldn't help us.  
Jesus, the baby born of a virgin in Bethlehem, was the Son of God.

He did what we couldn't do. He lived a righteous life that pleased God.

Still, he got crucified on a cross under the curse of sin.

He did that for us.

He died in our place.

But Jesus was raised from the grave to offer new life in his Spirit.

Jesus gives this new life to all who call upon him in faith.

The beauty of the gospel is that those who trust in Jesus need never again fear alienation from God. In Christ you are secure. In Christ you are loved. In Christ you are whole. In Christ you are chosen. In Christ you are pure. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

And now Christ has redeemed us to a life of a love and service, where we can reflect to others what he has done in us.

Simply believing this, Paul says, releases into us the power of God to make it so. Renewing our minds in this message, he tells the Romans, transforms ordinary, sinful people into the kinds of people who accomplish the very will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul says the gospel's inherent power means there's nothing more important to talk about the church than it. It is, literally, "in the first place." It is primary (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).



Paul even goes as far to say that there is nothing else he really cares about the people in his churches knowing. Christ and Christ crucified is enough (1 Corinthians 2:2). He tells Titus, his young protégé, that the gospel of God's grace not only bestows forgiveness but all the power they need to live godly lives in this world (Titus 2:11–12). Believing the gospel is not only how you get released from the penalty of sin, it's how you get released from the power of sin, also.

Because of the unparalleled power of the gospel, it is not something the biblical writers expect us to learn on the Romans Road and then leave behind. It contains everything necessary for success in the Christian life.

It's not just the 101 class of a four-year Christianity major.

Not just the diving board off of which we jump into the pool of Christianity.

Not just the milk that nourishes us until we are mature enough for meat.

The gospel is the meat. And the dessert too, for that matter.

More than just the 101 introductory class to Christianity, it's the entire campus at which classes are held.

More than just the diving board, it's the whole pool.

The way you grow in Christ is the way you began in Christ: faith in the finished work and the empty tomb. To progress is always to begin again.

Peter says that the gospel is so profound that the angels, who stand around the throne of God every day, long to just catch a glimpse of it (2 Peter 1:11–12). How hard must it be to impress an angel? They understand more theology than we ever will during our lifetimes. They had front row seats to God's mind-bending creative power that spun billions of stars into space. They saw God split the Red Sea and fill Balaam's donkey's mouth with words and sentences. They are themselves so powerful that a mere look at them turns the strongest human into a quivering puddle of fear. Yet these angels are still blown away by the simple gospel message. They want nothing more than to delve more deeply into it.

The beauty of the gospel is endless because the beauty of God is endless.

This means that wherever you are in your journey with Christ — whether you're in doubt that Jesus really is who he says he is or you've been convinced of the gospel's power for 70 years — you're just getting started. And the great news

for each of us is that, as Peter says, embedded in the gospel are all the resources you need to become everything God wants you to be (2 Peter 1:3).

Tragically, a lot of Christians have moved on from it.

I was once at a conference where the speaker before me explained that the church had heard enough about the death of Jesus. He said (and I wrote it down word-for-word because I couldn't believe it), "We need to stop talking so much about Jesus' death. Everyone already freakin' knows about that. We need to talk now about his life."

The Apostle Paul would never have said such a thing.

And not just because he would avoid dirty words like *freakin'*. No, Paul knew that the only way to understand Jesus' life and experience his power as our own is to lean more fully and deeply into his death.

A brief note here: what are you supposed to do when you are an invited guest and the speaker before you says something like that? Typically, I prefer to honor the role of "guest" and let the conference host answer to God for what has been said.

Typically.

But when dealing with an issue of first importance — the issue of first importance — I had to throw my hat in the ring. I said,

"Respectfully, I would encourage you never to do what the previous speaker has told you to do."

Yep. I did that.

And it was as awkward as you're imagining it.

Worth it.

Because the gospel is all we've got. @

Excerpted with permission from *Above All* by J.D. Greear. Copyright 2019, B&H Publishing Group.



**J.D. Greear** is pastor of *The Summit Church*, a gospel-centered community of more than 10,000 in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He is the author of several books, including *Not God Enough: Why Your Small God Leads to Big Problems* (2018), *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved* (2013), and *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (2011). In 2018, he was elected the 62nd president of the Southern Baptist Convention and the youngest in almost 40 years. J.D. and his wife, Veronica, live in Raleigh, where together they are raising four ridiculously cute kids: Khairs, Alethia, Ryah Layne, and Adon.

How *to* Support  
Your Pastor *in the* Call to

# REACH THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

The Example *of* Seven Men  
*from* the Bible *and* Seven Men  
*from* My Ministry

*by* JOHN TEMPLE



**I**N A TIME WHEN THE NUMBER of baptisms is decreasing, you'll hear an increased interest in improving our witness in many deacons meetings. Among the suggestions you may hear is how the pastor needs to be a better evangelist. The implication is that reaching the world for Christ is the preacher's job.

The New Testament church is the best example of how the church fulfills its mission to reveal Jesus to the world. Their efforts recorded in the book of Acts gives us a practical, biblical model.

The makeup of the early church was simple and clear. Every believer was to be a witness, living out a vibrant faith in Christ before an unbelieving world. The apostles were leaders who focused on the preaching of the Word and prayer. Every believer assumed the responsibility of sharing what he had with others so that any personal needs were met. The love demonstrated in the gathering of believers advertised the change Jesus had made in individuals and encouraged others to seek what they witnessed in those fellowships.

It is the development of a need that produced a new function within the church. In Acts 6, we read that some were overlooked in the care of the fellowship. To keep the apostles focused on the preaching of the Word and prayer, seven men were selected to oversee the unmet needs so that the leaders could continue their "Word" and "prayer" focus. The seven men selected were not given a title or position. Instead they were responsible to "wait on tables." It is from this Greek word, *diakonia*, that the title deacon will later be derived.

The names of the seven selected to serve in this ministry were listed in the Scripture. They met their task and fulfilled the need. As a result, the church resumed its focus. This renewed focus on Word, prayer, and practical ministry produced new converts to the faith.

**To keep the apostles focused on the preaching of the Word and prayer, seven men were selected to oversee the unmet needs so that the leaders could continue their "Word" and "prayer" focus.**

Some believe these seven men were not true deacons. There is no title attributed to them. Instead they are simply to be actively serving. Maybe, it should be seen that the evangelistic church never needed positions. It has always needed service. Acts 6 may be the epitome of productive deacon ministry.

Another point in the list of the seven men is that two stand out later for their participation in evangelism. Stephen will be the first martyr because of his witness for Jesus. The product of his death is the scattering of the gospel and the calling of a young missionary later known as Paul. Philip is recorded as going to Samaria where his witness was used to bring many to the faith. He also is recorded as obeying the Holy Spirit and explaining Jesus to the Ethiopian Eunuch which led to his conversion. It is with note that of the seven, the two latter mentioned both saw reaching the world for Christ as their responsibility, not just that of other church leaders.

Over the years I have served with several deacons who surpassed in their contribution to reaching others for Christ:

***I celebrate Dale.*** An electrician by trade, when called to be a deacon, he made preaching in the homeless shelter on Thursdays his priority. One day he called me crying. It seemed nine men had accepted Christ that day as Dale taught the Word. Through his tears, Dale asked me to pray for others to join him because he saw so many who needed Jesus, he felt a need for others to help. Dale later retired at age 42 from his job to enter seminary and become a NAMB missionary to “extreme sports.” Dale’s final contribution was at his funeral after he died in a parachute accident. Dale saw serving as a deacon tied to witnessing to the world.

***I celebrate Trey.*** Trey is a young deacon active in his community. Weekly, he writes a column in the local paper describing ministry needs of the underprivileged in the community. He developed a wonderful playground near a government assisted housing complex where he and others he recruits spend Sunday afternoons playing sports and sharing the gospel. Just last Sunday, a young boy professed Christ as Savior because a deacon saw that his commitment to action contributes to those being saved through the church.

***I celebrate Ken and Tommy.*** These two men coordinate a ministry of caring where they perform minor maintenance and offer practical help. A key place where they have made a difference throughout the community is in moving senior adults to a local retirement facility when a time of transition is needed. Beyond denominations and religious differences, the support they offer to seniors in a time of emotional upheaval has made the witness of their fellowship more visible.

***I celebrate Tom.*** Tom serves as greeter for a free medical clinic in his community. His responsibility is not only to be friendly but to assess the spiritual needs of the customers. One night, the clinic had 30 people accept Christ as Savior. It was people like Tom who brought the gospel in a caring way that opened the eyes of those in need.

***I celebrate Robert.*** Robert joined a ramp building ministry. In one year, they built about 110 ramps for people in the area where Robert lives who have physical disabilities. These ramps were provided free of charge. After their installation, the team prayed with the families and shared their faith. Many touched by this deacon and his ministry cannot go to church, so the church goes to them.

***I celebrate Ralph.*** Ralph was gifted in writing words of inspiration and encouragement. On several occasions, all members of the church staff received letters of appreciation that reminded us to keep the focus on the mission and not be consumed by mundane problems.

This list is but a sample of outstanding deacons who furthered the mission to the world. Why not add your name to the list. Partner with your pastor in reaching the world for Christ, and both of you will feel the fire of the Holy Spirit in your soul. May you both encourage each other. ☺

**John A. Temple** has retired from vocational ministry but continues to preach, write, and serve as an encourager to others walking the narrow way.





# 5 EASY WAYS TO EVANGELIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

*Ideas to Share Your Faith in a Non-threatening Way*  
by MATT TULLOS

*“I hear what you’re saying about sharing my faith, but I have an allergic reaction to it,” One member said after my sermon on evangelism. The member continued, “I break out in a cold sweat when I even think about prying my way into somebody’s eternal destiny and trying to get them to do what they need to do.”*

**F**OR MANY BELIEVERS, the term *evangelism* evokes visions of awkward unexpected home visits, feelings of intimidation and inadequacy, and a fair amount of nervousness. But evangelism can be a joyful adventure and the greatest thing believers will ever accomplish in their lives. Don’t get me wrong. Street witnessing and cold-calling evangelism are amazingly effective and inspiring, but every believer can do a few simple, creative, proactive things to exercise his

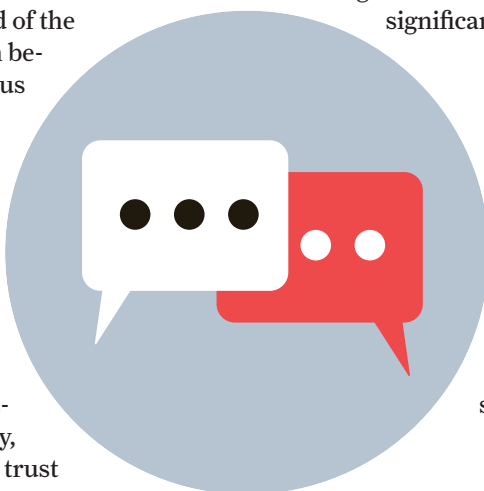
relational and sharing muscles. Here are some easy, surefire ways every member of your church can share his or her faith in a totally nonthreatening way.

## 1 **Video your faith story using your smartphone, and post it on social media.**

The video should be no longer than two minutes and can be a simple explanation for how you became a Christ-follower and how it's changed the trajectory of your life. If someone is camera shy, invite him to write his story as a post on Facebook®. At the end of the post or video, explain how someone can begin a faith journey by praying to ask Jesus to be the Lord of his life.

## 2 **Invite members to have gospel conversations.**

Many church members may shy away when you talk evangelism, but the idea of gospel conversations seems like a more realistic goal for them. So what is a gospel conversation? It's listening, asking questions, and relating the gospel. Ultimately, we are challenging people to place their trust in Jesus. Jesus illustrated this time after time. His evangelism happened organically and situationally. John Meador says "Training believers to have gospel conversations with their friends, neighbors, and co-workers must be one of the top priorities for pastors and leaders today." Sam Greer, pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has a unique way of motivating his church to have gospel conversations. In their worship center, they have plexiglass display that has *Jesus* written on the front of it. Inside are white Ping-Pong® balls and red Ping-Pong balls. The white ones represent every gospel conversation people in their church have had. The red ones represent someone who came to Christ. Every time a gospel conversation or a salvation occurs, members are invited to drop a Ping-Pong ball into the display. In one year, they recorded more than 1900 gospel conversations.



**When people in your church are challenged to share their faith, stories about evangelism and Gospel conversations will stoke the fire and increase the hunger to see more people come to trust Jesus.**

## 3 **Challenge church members to adopt their block for the gospel.**

We can all get to know by name the families in walking distance of our homes. Offer assistance. Give gifts on special occasions. Host a barbecue or a game viewing party. Show up at the hospital when a health crisis happens. As we do life with our neighbors, we will earn their attention and ultimately we'll get a chance to share the gospel with them. A little investment goes a long way in being heard when you start to share things of eternal significance.

## 4 **Challenge your people to practice sharing the gospel on a friend who is not a believer.**

The invitation would go something like this: "My church is asking me to practice sharing my spiritual story with someone. Could I buy your lunch? And would you allow me to practice sharing my story?" Recently, I've heard testimonies of people who came to faith in Jesus through this simple, non-threatening invitation.

## 5 **Practice "prayer-paration."**

We all know people who are without the hope of Jesus. Above health issues, financial hardships, and personal issues, our unbelieving friends should be at the top of the church prayer list. I know the more I pray for someone, the more courageous I will become in sharing Jesus. Ultimately, we can't save anyone. But we know the One who can. Let's challenge the church to have a list of people we'd love to reach for Christ.

As we pray, share, give, and go, we have to encourage each other to go where the people are. It really is Good News. In fact, the gospel is the greatest news on the planet. When people in your church are challenged to share their faith, stories about evangelism and gospel conversations will stoke the fire and increase the hunger to see more people come to trust Jesus. There's really nothing better to create excitement, ease tensions, and grow a church than a group of people committed to sharing and celebrating this great news. 🙌

**Matt Tullos** is a freelance writer and stewardship specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board.



## A DEACON AND EVANGELISM

More often than not, openness to the gospel depends on the depth of the relationship you have with the other person.

— Heiden Ratner, pastor  
WALK Church

Source: Las Vegas NAMB.net



It doesn't matter how many buildings we construct, churches we plant or sermons we preach if we're not intent on doing everything so that lost men and women and children will experience the transforming work of God.

— J.D. Greear, pastor  
Summit Church



# 47%

**Almost half** of Millennials agree at least somewhat that it is wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith.

Source: Barna.com



# 55%

**More than half** of those who attend church at least once a month say they have not shared with someone how to become a Christian in the past six months.

Source: LifeWay Research's 2019 Discipleship Pathway Assessment study



If you don't have a passion that people can see and people can feel and people can hear and people can touch, it will never, ever translate to your people. Evangelism, at the end of the day, it's not a matter of the head. It's a matter of the heart.

— James Merritt

Source: NAMB.net Podcast with Johnny Hunt



### 3 Reasons to Incorporate Sunday School as an Evangelistic Strategy in Your Church

Because Sunday School is:

1. The church organized for evangelism.
2. The church mobilized for evangelism.
3. The church individualized.

—Allan Taylor

Source: Factsandtrends.net



# Turning the Tide

4 Simple Pathways  
to Reach Your  
Community with  
the Gospel

*by* NATHAN LORICK

ISTOCKPHOTO



**I**F YOU TRAVEL regularly by plane, you will eventually experience the dreaded frustration of a delayed flight. Whether it's due to late arrivals, a late crew, bad weather, technology failures, or security concerns, travelers dread delays. One of the most frustrating is a maintenance delay. I am grateful for people who know planes inside out and who spend their time making sure the aircraft is up to standards. I'm glad they always put safety first. So why are maintenance delays frustrating when flying? It's because when I look at the plane I'm getting ready to board, it looks like it is in the right condition to fly me to my desired destination. But underneath the surface, something is hindering the plane from flying the way it was designed.

The same is true of many of our churches. To the average church attender, it may seem like the church is doing well and fulfilling its mission. However, research reveals that this is simply not true. The church is losing momentum, particularly in the area of evangelism. Like the airplane I'm getting ready to board, the church looks great on the outside, but somehow it is being hindered from operating the way it was designed. Yes, this is disheartening and frustrating. No, this is clearly not what the church should be experiencing. So what do we do? How can we turn the tide and see churches mobilized in their communities to share the gospel? I want to submit four simple pathways to mobilizing your church to share the gospel.

## 1. Pray for the Lost.

I CANNOT OVERSTATE THE NEED for churches to begin praying for the lost in their community. Jesus prayed for the lost in John 17. Paul prayed for the lost in Romans 10. However, many churches today never intentionally and passionately pray for those without Christ. Prayer must be an essential and nonnegotiable part of a church's strategy to reach her community. I am convinced that we will never see the movement of God we so deeply desire until we first experience a movement of prayer we so desperately need.

As a servant leader in your church, you can serve your church by being a leader in this area and consistently



praying for the lost privately and publicly. Make this a regular part of the ministry you are leading. Encourage your fellow deacons and your family to join you in praying specifically for persons in your life without Jesus.

Our burden for the lost must be directly correlated to the prayer life of the church. If churches will pray for the lost, they will develop an undeniable burden for the lost. Pray for the lost!

## 2. Equip the Church.

ONE OF THE GREATEST TRAGEDIES in the church today is that people who have tremendous gifts and resources to advance the gospel have no idea how to use those gifts and resources. I believe the church will be held accountable for the manner in which it equips the saints to do the work of the ministry. If the people in our churches are going to reach their communities with the life-changing gospel, they must be adequately equipped to do so. Churches must have an intentional and strategic plan to equip their people to live on mission for Christ in the various avenues God has given them. Equip your church to use their gifts and resources for the gospel's advance, and watch how God moves among you!

As a servant leader, support your pastor's efforts to equip the church. Attend any and every evangelism training offered, and use your God-given influence to get others to attend with you.

## 3. Motivate Toward the Gospel.

PEOPLE TODAY ARE ALWAYS ON A CONSTANT SEARCH for significance. In fact, we are regularly bombarded with the next way to get rich quick or get healthy overnight. Our lives are easy to motivate. However, the church has not seemed to find the best way to motivate people for eternal purposes.

If we truly want to see the gospel advance in an unprecedented way, we must motivate people toward the gospel. We have to help our congregations see all the opportunities God gives us each day to be a part of spreading the gospel.

The churches we see in Acts were not motivated by wealth or experiencing their best life on earth, they were motivated for people to hear the gospel. The people in your church are the greatest asset your church has. You must find a way to motivate them toward the gospel! As a deacon, others are looking to you to be an example and a motivator for evangelism.

## 4. Engage Your Community.

GOD HAS PUT YOUR CHURCH right where He wants it. As Ezekiel was placed right in the middle of the valley of dry bones, you have been set right in the middle of lostness. In fact, God has entrusted your church with the gospel in your community. If you want your people to leverage the gifts God has given them, provide them with strategic opportunities to do just that. Every believer wants to be used by God. If you create avenues in and through your church for your people to utilize the gifts God has given them, they will engage. So get out and engage your community. God has you there for a purpose!

Reaching a community with the gospel is not rocket science, but it is hard work. Evangelism is not for the faint of heart or for the spiritually lazy. It requires engaging in battle with the enemy! Your church, along with the Holy Spirit, has all she needs to see a gospel movement in your city: your people on mission.

It is time we begin living the way we were designed. Mobilizing people toward evangelism takes an intentional and creative effort along with a "whatever it takes" attitude. However, at the end of the day, that's what we are to be about. Let's be intentional and fervent and see how God moves! 🌀

**Nathan Lorick** is the executive director of the Colorado Baptist General Convention. His passion is to see the church come alive through intentional evangelism and missions. He and Jenna have three sons and one daughter.



# March



## THE MEETING AGENDA

Note: Some items require prior preparation by the person who leads the meeting, such as enlisting others for specific assignments. Good preparation will increase effectiveness and generate greater interest.

## DEVOTION

### Be an Evangelist: To Family Members

“Andrew ... first found his own brother Simon and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ ... and he brought Simon to Jesus” (John 1:40-42).

**P**ERHAPS SOME of the most difficult individuals for us to talk to about Christ are family members. Family members know us better than most anyone. They have seen us at our best; they have also heard us at our worst. They know we are not perfect; therefore, we may hesitate to witness to them out of fear of rejection. Even so, family members, whether in our household or extended family, can be part of our personal “fields ... ready for harvest” (John 4:35).

Andrew is a good example of one who reached out to family to tell them about Jesus. He was a disciple of John the Baptizer (John 1:35,40). He and another of John’s disciples were with the Baptizer one day when Jesus came by. “Look! the Lamb of God,” (John 1:29) John declared. Andrew and his companion followed Jesus, spending the day with Him. It was a life-changing day for Andrew. He became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, God’s anointed one.

What would Andrew do with what he had learned? With whom would he share his experience? Immediately, his brother Simon came to mind. So he returned home, went straight to his brother, and told him the good news. And in some way, whether through a simple invitation or persistent urging, Andrew “brought Simon to Jesus.” As a result, Simon’s life also was changed.

Andrew had the good news of Jesus. He could not withhold it from the one person closest to him — his brother. Neither can we!

- Lead the deacons to discuss experiences they have had sharing Christ with immediate or extended family members who have not professed Christ as Savior.
- Who are members of your family who need to hear the gospel? How are you sharing it with them?
- Identify some specific actions your deacon body can take to help one another and other church members be prepared to share the good news of Jesus with family members. ☞

- Call on a deacon to lead this devotional. Use the questions to stimulate discussion. Pray specifically for the salvation of family members the deacons identify.

- Note that the theme of this issue of *Deacon Magazine* is “A Deacon and Evangelism.” Overview and discuss the theme article (pp. 12-14). Consider its relevance for deacon ministry in your church.

- Enlist someone to overview the article “Sharing Your Faith at Home” by Steve Houser (pp. 30-31). Discuss ways the church supports the spiritual development of families.

- Provide time for the pastor to speak to other aspects of his ministry and events during the Spring months in which deacons may be involved.

- Review and discuss other agenda items.

- Close with prayer for the families of the church.

# April



## THE MEETING AGENDA

Note: Some items require prior preparation by the person who leads the meeting, such as enlisting others for specific assignments. Good preparation will increase effectiveness and generate greater interest.

## DEVOTION

### Be an Evangelist: To Children

“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, ‘There’s a boy here who has five barely loaves and two fish — but what are they for so many?’” (John 6:8-9).

**T**HEIR NAMES are common: Don, Raymond, Richard, and Sam are only a few. They were never well-known, but they invested themselves in work with boys in their local church: teaching the Bible, leading mission education groups, taking the boys on camping trips, being their friends. They influenced those boys to make personal decisions to follow Christ. In his own way, each man brought boys to Jesus.

The story of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand was considered so important that it was included in all the gospels. Only John provides the detail about Andrew’s encounter with a boy who had a lunch, and even that is noted only in passing. Perhaps the other gospel writers thought it to be an incidental detail.

Nevertheless, here is another incident in which Andrew was involved in connecting someone to Jesus. We can only imagine how Andrew met the boy in such a large crowd, learned about his simple lunch, and apparently earned his trust to get him to give it away. Nevertheless, Andrew was able to do all three of those things. And once again, he made a difference. Would this lad ever forget the moment? And the boy has become a model in perpetuity that reminds us that even the least given to the Lord can be useful to Him in ways unimaginable.

Andrew took actions that resulted in a young boy — and his simple lunch — being brought to Jesus! How might we exert that kind of influence on children?

- Lead deacons to recall men in their lives who were instrumental in their coming to Jesus and teaching them that even the little they have to offer can be used by Him.
- In what ways does your church provide spiritual nurture for children that prepare them to come to Jesus? What may need to be put in place to encourage them in their spiritual growth after their personal decision to follow Christ? ☯

- Call on a deacon to lead this devotional. Use the questions to stimulate discussion. Pray specifically for the church’s ministry to children.

- Prior to the meeting, ask deacons to read the article “How Every Ministry in the Church Can Be a Gospel-Sharing Ministry” (pp. 28-29). Consider inviting whoever provides leadership for children’s ministry to discuss how evangelism appropriate to that age group is carried out.

- Ask the pastor to explain his view on evangelism of children. Also allow time for him to address other ministry issues or concerns on his heart.

- Review and discuss other agenda items.

- Close with prayer that every ministry will support the sharing of the good news of Jesus — even to children.



# May



## THE MEETING AGENDA

Note: Some items require prior preparation by the person who leads the meeting, such as enlisting others for specific assignments. Good preparation will increase effectiveness and generate greater interest.

## DEVOTION

### Be an Evangelist: To the Stranger

“Now some Greeks ... came to Philip ... and requested of him, ‘Sir, we want to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus” (John 12:20-22).

**A**S BAPTISTS, we have long engaged in global missions. But now peoples of various racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds are our neighbors. Not everyone looks like us, talks like us, or thinks like us. However, in one way, they are just like us — they need Jesus. What are we to do?

The problem is not new. Some Greeks came to worship at the Passover festival in Jerusalem. They likely were “God-fearers,” Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism but not full converts. No doubt these men had heard about Jesus, if not before they came to Jerusalem, certainly after, for He had created quite a stir with His entrance into the city (see John 12:12-15). They wanted to know more about Him.

In some way they were able to identify Philip as a follower of Jesus. Therefore, asking for his help probably seemed like a natural and reasonable action on their part. Philip’s response to them suggests he was not sure what to do. Maybe Philip wondered, *Would Jesus actually be interested in these Gentiles?*

He found his friend Andrew and told him about the request. Andrew didn’t have to think about it. He, accompanied by Philip, went directly to Jesus. Andrew had a grasp of the mission of Jesus. He had learned from the beginning that Jesus had come to take “away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Andrew saw that mission as all-inclusive. Even those who were different, strangers, and “not from here,” must be brought to Jesus.

Andrew had a heart for all people and devoted himself to bringing them to Jesus! Should you and I do any less?

- Discuss the deacons’ and church’s attitude toward reaching out to people who are different, whether racially, ethnically, economically, or socially.
- What particular actions might your church take to increase its participation in global missions and also to reach out to another segment of people in your own community? ☞

*Devotions and meeting helps are by **Ron Brown**. Ron is retired from LifeWay. He is a writer for Herschel Hobbs Commentary and a member of Pleasant Heights Baptist Church, Columbia, Tennessee. He is husband to Connie, father of two adult children, and granddaddy to four grandchildren.*

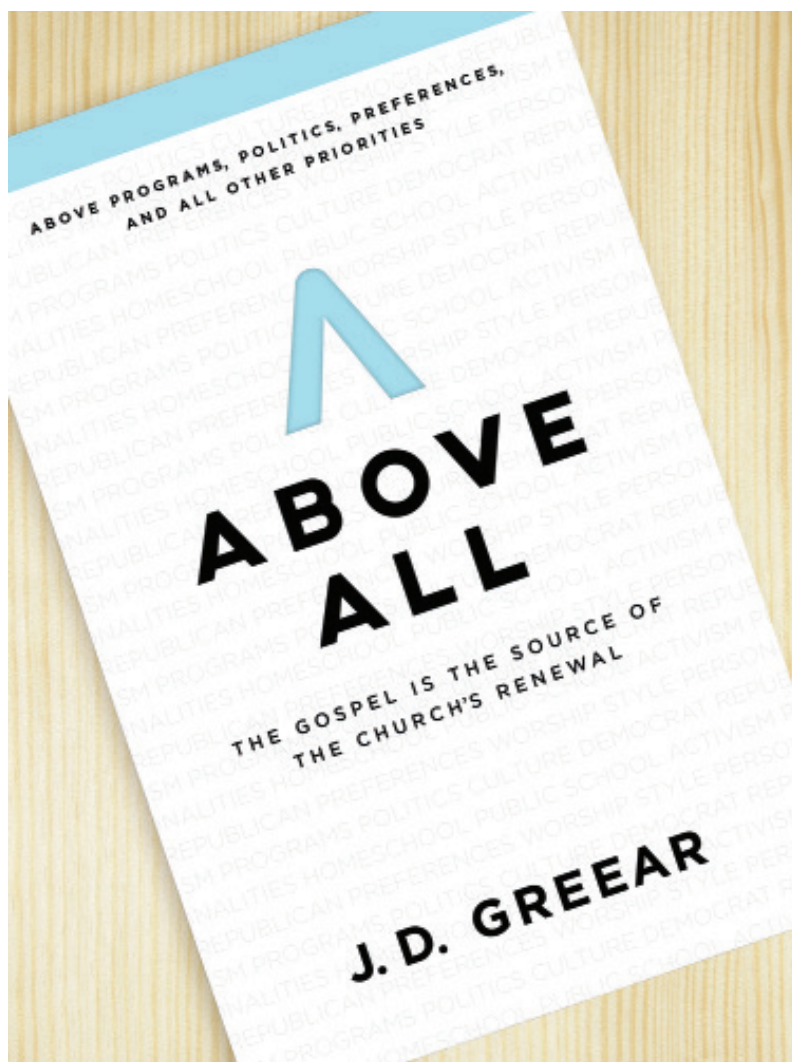
- Call on a deacon to lead this devotional. Use the questions to stimulate discussion. Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead in reaching out to the “strangers” in the community.

- Enlist some deacons to overview these articles: “Everyday Evangelism” by Matt Queen (pp. 22-23), “6 Practical Ways a Deacon’s Wife Can Share the Gospel” by Diana Davis (pp. 25-26), and “Turning the Tide” by Nathan Lorick (pp. 43-45). Discuss ways the articles support lifestyle evangelism, especially as related to sharing the gospel with people they encounter from different cultural backgrounds.

- Provide time for the pastor to address ministry issues or concerns.

- Review and discuss other agenda items.

- Close with prayer to make a difference in someone’s life this week — no matter who they may be.



RESOURCE REVIEW *by* BEN REED

## *Above All: The Gospel Is the Source of the Church's Renewal*

*by* J.D. Greear

**M**Y 10-YEAR-OLD and I were driving down the road just last week, and he asked me a curious question.

“Dad, did you see the phone that our friend was using?”

“Yeah, buddy, I did.”

\*insert chuckle\* “It was so old, wasn’t it?”

“Well, it was from a few years ago. But different people have different things, and choose to spend their money ...”

(Interrupting me) “Yeah, but ... it can’t even take pictures, Dad!”

As if the sum total of human progress was found in the ability to take pictures with a device we store in our pockets and record each and every happening of our momentary existence on this planet, my son in this instance revealed a bigger principle. We have a constant desire to change, update, and modernize *everything*. Irrelevancy is found in devices that are more than a few years, or even a few months, old. We want newer, faster, and better. We want things that are enlightened and fresh like we are: products, processes, and politics that work in modern times, that aren’t stuck in the past.

The problem, though, isn’t just our pursuit of a faster phone that takes better pictures. The issue starts when we begin to apply that same principle to the gospel. In search of a gospel that fits in with our politics, policies, and preferences, we begin to lose the essence and power of the gospel itself.

And this is the mindset author J.D. Greear sets out to dispel in his book, *Above All: The Gospel Is the Source of the Church's Renewal*.

I’ve been following Jesus for decades. I’ve been a vocational pastor for 13 years. But I *still* found myself challenged, shaped, and encouraged throughout this book. Greear does a masterful job of helping us see how the gospel’s preeminence in our lives is of primary importance.

“If the gospel is not above all else, it’s not even the gospel anymore.” (page 5)

For many of us, it’s not that we’ve gotten the gospel completely wrong. “We’ve removed the gospel from its place of first importance. It no longer is supreme. It no longer is our first priority. We must turn back to the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus if we want to go forward in mission.” (page 14)

Greear teaches us how to change, hope, multiply, and give grace with a gospel lens. And if you’ve ever desired to think with a gospel focus in the arena of politics, not just adding to the noise but giving a distinct focus, slow down while you read *Above All*.

This is more than just a book. It’s a call for a gospel renewal. Share this with every leader you know. “If we confess the gospel faithfully, we are going to be unstoppable.” (page 210) Let’s live out the gospel together! 🙌

**Ben Reed** is the author of *Starting Small: The Ultimate Small Group Blueprint*. He is the adult ministries pastor at Mission Community Church in Gilbert, Arizona.





## EVANGELISM

“Then he said to his disciples,  
“The harvest is abundant, but the  
workers are few. Therefore, pray to  
the Lord of the harvest to send out  
workers into his harvest.”

*Matthew 9:37-38*

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