



Presenting Christ-Part 1
The Role of the Holy Spirit
Pastor Mike Fabarez

I can attest to the fact that there are some good things going on at the men's retreat. I was privileged to be able to speak to them a couple of times—Friday night, Saturday morning—and told them I was praying (and I had been) that they would come back to Orange County different men than as they left. I said, I'm just praying the same thing your wives have all been praying. Of course, I meant it in the best possible way—I want them to meet God—and God has, I think, begun to answer those prayers. God's doing a lot of things out there. And of course, our Reformation tour—everybody's landed safely in Berlin, and things are off to a good start there as well.

But it's great to be teaching—great to be teaching out in Temecula this weekend and back here today. And as a teacher, of course, one of the things we try to do is try to make complex things as simple as we possibly can. So it's in that vein that I want to give you this morning an outline of the entire Bible, a simplified outline of the entire Bible. I'll give you a second to get your pens ready for this. Are you ready?

Point one: Genesis 1–2. God creates people. (We're two chapters down now.)

Point two: Genesis 3. People rebel. You with me so far?

Point three: This may take a while—you're thinking it won't take that long because this is Revelation—I'm sorry: Genesis 4 through Revelation 22. So you got me so far—God creates people (Genesis 1–2), people rebel (Genesis 3). Now, here's the third point: Genesis 4 through Revelation 22—God reestablishes his kingdom. That's what's going on in the rest of the Bible. People rebel. God now is at work to reestablish his kingdom, the apex of which, in the New Testament, is he presents his King—Son of David, the ultimate King, Jesus Christ.

And the good news is, as we live in that third point of the overall outline of the Bible, God has now given us the privilege and responsibility of joining with him in expanding the kingdom of God. I mean, that's the point. We get to pull people, persuade people—do our best to bring people—to be fishers of men, if you will, and bring them under the umbrella of the Lordship of Christ, and be able to see the kingdom of God expand, or as Jesus put it, to see the Church of Christ be established and founded and have the gates of hell not be able to prevail against it. Now gates are no problem, you know, if they never attack anybody, right? Gates are there as defensive measures. But the church has to be expanding; we're to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.



The point is that God has said that you have the privilege and responsibility of joining with him in advancing and expanding the kingdom. It is the thing you'd be praying about. It's the thing that you and I should feel the privilege and responsibility of being a part of. If you're taking notes, there's a couple things just in thinking through that idea—the privilege side of it. We left this out at Easter this last year when we were teaching through the story of the woman at the well in Sychar there. But one of the parts of that narrative that we didn't have time for is when the guys come back—the disciples—with their lunch for Jesus and they said, "Here, eat." Remember what he says there in John 4:34–36? He says, "Listen, my food is to do the will of him who sent me." That's not that he wasn't going to eat lunch, but he said, really, if you want to talk about satisfaction in my life, I'm satisfied doing the work that God has called me to do.

Now they were all thinking, Why are you spending time talking to this Samaritan woman? Well, he made it clear elsewhere that "I've come to seek and to save that which is lost." And he spent all that time—as we looked at a few weeks back—thinking about what it means to see Christ as the one that was expected: the Coming One, the Prophet, the Messiah. And then he goes on to say this: it'd be good for you, disciples, to join with me in this labor. He said, people are already working right now, and they are receiving wages for eternal life. There's a payoff in this—we're talking about privilege. It is satisfying; it is rewarding. And then he said, "so that those who sow and those who reap may rejoice together."

There's a side of the privilege right there of being a part of God's work in expanding the kingdom that I hate to think some of you have never experienced. You've never had the privilege of leading someone to a place of real repentance and faith and watching people bow the knee to Christ—to have that authority of the Lordship of Christ expand over their lives. And if you haven't, man, I'm hoping in the next six weeks as we talk about this, that you'll have the privilege of doing that. That's the privilege.

Like a lot of things in the Bible, there's a carrot and then there's the stick, right? There's the privilege, and then there's the responsibility. If you're taking notes, here's the other side—I want to talk about responsibility. You might want to jot this one down: Proverbs 24:11–12. Proverbs 24:11–12 tells us this. He says, "You need to rescue those who are being led off to death; you need to hold back those that are stumbling toward the slaughter." And that just makes sense. If you see someone in danger of dying, you need to help them. We even put it in the jurisprudence of modern American law as the Good Samaritan laws. You see someone there that needs help, and you have the power to help them—you want to help them. And the next verse, verse 12 of that passage, that next proverb says this: "And if you say, 'We didn't know, didn't know'—does not he who searches the hearts of man—doesn't he... doesn't he know? Isn't the one—here's how it ends—who keeps watch over your soul know, and will he not repay?"



Now think about that. God is saying, “Listen, if you know that you have an ability to keep someone back from death, and you don’t do it, you’ll be held responsible for that.” You have the privilege of the joy, satisfaction, and eternal rewards of being someone who is partnering with God in expanding the kingdom. But if you don’t, and you recognize that—if you get to the end of your life—your neighbors, your friends, your coworkers, and they have not submitted to the Lordship of Christ, they face what the Bible calls the second death. The first one is nothing compared to the second one—where you’ll hear from God, “Depart from me into outer darkness where there’s weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” If that’s really what’s at stake here, that’s a huge responsibility.

“Well, I’m not an evangelist. I’m not skilled in apologetics. I’m not the salesman type.” Think of yourself—just down there, what, three weeks ago tomorrow—the Boston Marathon bombing. Just imagine you’re, I don’t know, 50 yards away. And you hear this huge explosion and your ears are ringing, and you look at yourself and you’re okay. But you look down the way and you see all these people in that horrific scene—we’ve all seen those pictures—and people’s limbs blown off. And you think, I’m scared. I feel traumatized. I’m nervous. I’m under-clubbed. I’m overwhelmed. I’m not trained. I don’t know what to do. I’m not a doctor. What do you do? You walk away? Turn your back? You leave? Or you do what a lot of people did—you rush in to see what you can do. I may not be able to do much, but I’ll do whatever I can, because you’re going to bleed out right now. This is life or death.

The Bible says that if you see someone stumbling to the slaughter, if someone’s being led to death, you better step in and do something. Now Paul says after you do your job, then their blood is no longer on your hands. You’ve done what you can do. But have we done what we can do with our neighbors, our coworkers, our friends, our extended family? There’s both a privilege and responsibility in this.

And I know some people—in this series, I mean—you may plan to take your vacation early and miss this whole series because you feel like we get hammered on this all the time at Compass Bible Church. Well, you do understand there’s something about being an evangelical church that makes this quite appropriate. Evangelical Protestant Christianity understands that if you do not submit your life to Jesus Christ and be reconciled to God, you will have a huge problem when you face your Creator. I mean, that’s what we are all about. That’s what the Bible is all about. That’s what “evangelical” means—that we’re about evangelism. So if you don’t want to hear about that, you should pick a different religion, really, because that is the responsibility laid before all of us as Christians.

So it’s a safeguard for you, as the apostle said, and it’s no trouble for me, as we get to a text like this in Luke 4, to watch Luke present Christ to his readers, and to watch Jesus present himself to the people in his hometown. It’s no trouble for us to say, “Well, what about us? What are we doing to present Christ in our generation?” It’d be a good thing for us to go through that. But I don’t want



you to become entrenched in a mindset that says, “This is not for me.” And I don’t want you either to pat yourself on the back saying, “I don’t need this series because I’m already doing it.” If you’re doing it, maybe in the next six weeks we can figure out how to do it more effectively. If you are not doing it, maybe you can be budged from the place you’ve been with all the excuses and all the reasons that this isn’t for you—to just be open to what God should be doing in your heart every time you open the Bible to remind you of your primary identity as an ambassador of Christ.

Part of this—and this is not in our text this morning—but as I think about the topic of evangelism that we’re going to deal with here for the next six weeks, I think maybe we just don’t have compassion for people. Maybe we don’t like to look at the people that are perishing. We don’t like to consider it. We don’t like to think about it. And I understand—that’s an obstacle that I can’t address at length—but at least I need to say it. Are you, I mean, cold-hearted as it relates to this? Jesus sat there at the bottom of Matthew 9, and he saw the crowds in downtown Jerusalem, and the Bible said he had compassion for them. That means he was moved—and even that word “spell lengthen,” which I often have to comment on because it’s such a great Greek word—it has to do with a visceral reaction in our gut that we feel. He had compassion; he was moved in his stomach over the crowds. Why? Because they were helpless, harassed like sheep without a shepherd. They needed the Messiah.

And he turns to his disciples, and you might remember this powerful line from the end of Matthew 9. He says, “You know, the harvest is plentiful.” Look at all these people that need Christ. “But the workers are few.” So he said, “Why don’t you pray...” And I love this—you want to talk about privilege and responsibility—he said, pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he might—very strong Greek word here—*ekballō*—he might thrust forth workers into his field; whether by carrot or stick, privilege or responsibility, that they get pushed out into the harvest field. So my prayer for you, our pastoral staff’s prayer for you, and for all of us, is that in the next six weeks, as we examine Christ being presented to the readers of Luke and Christ being presented in the cities of Nazareth and Capernaum, and comparing them, that we could sit back and say, “Hey, in our church, we got a lot more workers in the harvest field in South Orange County,” because we’ve taken this passage seriously.

Let’s look at it. Now, if you haven’t turned there already—Luke 4. If you glance through the remainder of the chapter here with your Bibles open, you’ll see that we have two major sections that begin in verse 16 and run all the way to verse 44. You have the section about Jesus preaching and presenting himself in the city of Nazareth, which you might remember is where he was raised. Where was he born—what city? Bethlehem. And then he moved up to Nazareth, as you might remember. And that was his childhood home, which is not too far from the Sea of Galilee. There’s Nazareth. And then he’s going to go to Capernaum, which is around a little bit around the Sea of Galilee, and that will become his headquarters—his new hometown. So we’ve got his old hometown he presents himself to; his new hometown he presents himself to. And we’re going to examine both of those in the next following five sermons.



This passage, though, that we're going to look at today—not so much expositively but at least thematically—we're going to look at the way Luke sets this up. He sets it up with two simple verses here, two sentences. Verse 14—let's read it: “Jesus returned...” Now think about that—returned. Why? Because he's down there—what did we just end with? Chapter 3: Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River down south, probably near the Dead Sea; the temptation down in the Judean desert, outside of Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea. That's all in the southern part of Israel. Then he's going to return. Now, the other Gospel writers tell us it was because John was in prison, which he did talk about—Luke did—in chapter 3. And John tells us—the Gospel writer John tells us—that there's a lot of animosity toward Christ that's brewing in the upper echelon of the religious leaders—the Pharisees. So he looks at the temperature of what's going on in his ministry in Judea, which we don't learn a lot about, and he makes the trek up to the northern part of Israel in Galilee, which means he has to pass through the middle part of the nation of Israel, which was the part occupied by the Samaritans—which we taught about at Easter this last year.

So this is describing the move from the southern—early and not known much about his ministry there other than the temptation and the baptism of Christ. Now he's going to spend time in what we call the Galilean ministry up north. So he's returning. And here's the phrase—it's worth underlining because this will be the theme of our morning: “in the power of the Spirit.” “In the power of the Spirit,” which is going to involve a lot of things in this text—not only why he went up north, not only, you know, the relationship he has with the Holy Spirit, but also the product of the ministry. Let's keep reading: “and a report about him went throughout all the surrounding country.” So here's the deal: if I just attach that to this, I know that the Spirit of God here—the power of the Spirit—that gives us a sense of the dynamism or the energy of what the Spirit is doing. He is motivating and allowing and enabling the spreading of the message of Christ, which is what has to happen if we're going to do evangelism. “He taught in their synagogues”—much more on that as we look at his ministry in Nazareth; that's coming up—“being glorified by all.”

So, the success of evangelism and spreading the message—that's really not the totality of the success. The success is really when you see the rebels turn to citizens of the kingdom who bow their knee to Christ. And that's happening—they're glorifying the King; they're glorifying Christ. So successful evangelism is summarized in these opening two sentences in Luke 4:14–15. Jesus goes up to the northern region of Galilee, and he has success in the message going out, and then people's hearts being changed. And you should circle the word “all” there because every time we hit that in the text—particularly the narrative text in Christ's life—we've got to ask ourselves, What “all” are we talking about? Right?

You've heard me say this before, but it's worth noting if it's not embedded in your minds yet—we always need to ask ourselves: Is this “all without distinction,” or “all without exception”? Is this all without distinction—in other words, he's glorified by all kinds of people—or is this all without exception—he is glorified by every last single person? Now that should be easy to answer by just looking at verse 16, which is the next verse, which if you have a heading on it—what does it summarize? The ESV editors put a heading over it. Does it say “Jesus Accepted by All at Nazareth”? Is that what it says? Correct me if I'm wrong—“Rejected.” So we know it doesn't mean

he was glorified by all without exception, but he was certainly glorified by all without distinction. We even know from John's Gospel that heading up there, he ends up winning half a city in Sychar of Samaritans to Christ. He gets them to recognize his role as Messiah. So they put their trust in him. So he is going to be glorified in Capernaum and Nazareth by all kinds of people. So there is success here in Christ's evangelistic ministry as he presents himself in these two cities.

But what I want to focus on is that phrase you underlined: "in the power of the Spirit." The power of the Spirit. You should note this theologically before we go further: there is no need—really, if you think about it—for the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be dependent upon, if you will, the power of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, to get his ministry done. But he does. And that's the model throughout the Gospels, and Luke in particular likes to point that out all the time. And that is that in his humility—as we study, like Philippians 2—that he "empties himself" of the independent exercise of all of his divine prerogatives. He is willingly submitting himself not only to the Father and his will, but to the empowerment of the Spirit of God, the third person of the Godhead. So in the humility of the incarnation, he is dependent, if you will, on the power of the Spirit for effective ministry. And that's a great paradigm because it gives us the template of saying, "I've got to do that," because you're not the second person of the Godhead—you understand that? So we have to depend on the power of the Spirit to get this work done.

Now, keep your finger here in Luke 4 and turn with me, if you would, to John 16. In John 16, if we're going to understand the role of the Spirit in evangelism, we need to analyze what the Spirit is tasked in the Bible to do—what God has designed the Spirit to do. What is he doing? What is the role he plays? It couldn't be more specific, I suppose, than John 16. As Jesus is talking about being crucified, being resurrected, and ascending back to the Father, and all these guys are bummed out thinking, "You're going to leave us," and in verse 7 he says, "Well, I know you're sad about it all. Nevertheless,"—this is John 16:7—"I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away." Why is that? Well, because in the schedule of God, "If I do not go away, the Helper"—is there a capital H on that in your Bibles? That's the word—if you've been around church, you know the Greek word—*paraklētos*; *para*, the Greek preposition "alongside of"; *klētos*, which is from the verb *kaleō*, "to call"—to call in someone alongside of you; sometimes translated an "advocate," or if you need a lawyer you call someone to help you. The point, though, is that if I leave, you're going to have another person of the Godhead—the third person of the Godhead—who is going to come as the Helper. He comes now alongside of you. I am here now helping you, but the Spirit of God is going to help you in a whole new way when I go. "The Helper is going to come—the *paraklētos* is going to come. If I go, I will send him to you."

Verse 8: "And when he comes"—now here's the point. They're all the disciples that were called to be fishers of men; everybody called under the Lordship of Christ—they're all tasked with being evangelists. And so here's the Spirit—he's going to help you, and he's going to help you do what? What's the Spirit going to help you do? Well, he's going to do the work of this—and here's the key verb, worth highlighting, circling. Here is really the fundamental ministry of the Holy Spirit when it comes to evangelism: "to convict the world." To convict the world—to get to that place in our heart where we feel that ache, that pain, that crisis moment of "Yes, you're right, I'm wrong,"—the



conviction of the Spirit concerning three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment. Think that through: conviction about sin; conviction about what's righteous; conviction about judgment. Now, those are all essential for evangelism and have to happen in the life of someone I'm sharing with—in the office, my family, the neighborhood.

He explains, verse 9: "concerning sin, because they do not believe in me." Every person you share with that's not a Christian—they don't trust in Christ. Now, I often talk about how frustrating it is to have the verb *pisteuō* in Greek—that means "trust"—translated as "believe," because it means more than just having in my head, "Oh, I believe Jesus lived. I believe Jesus is the Messiah. I believe Jesus died for me." It's not mental assent. And oftentimes just pointing out that there's a preposition next to it—"believe in," or "trust in"—that makes it clear. I need to call people to trust in Christ. I need people to go from being a rebel to being submissive and bowing the knee to Jesus Christ and being reconciled to God by aligning themselves with Christ. Well, they need to be convicted that they need that. They need to be convicted that they're not doing that. They need to be convicted that they are a rebel, and they need to bow the knee to Christ. The Spirit of God—that's his job. He's going to convict the world of that.

"And concerning righteousness," verse 10, "because I go to the Father, and you'll see me no longer." Now, you could figure—spend the afternoon with Christ, it's going to make you feel like a dirty, rotten sinner because he's the paragon of virtue. He does everything right. It's no wonder that people like, you know, James or Jude or whatever struggled with being a sibling of Christ. Can you imagine your brother doing everything right the entire time? When Peter spent a little time with Jesus, he said, "Away from me, I'm a sinful man." So Christ is no longer this measure of righteousness that you look at and recognize: here's what God expects from mankind. He's now ascended to the Father after the resurrection. How are we going to get people to recognize they fall short of the glory of God? The Spirit is going to be sent into the world to do that. And as you go out there, the One called in alongside of you in what you're called to do—he's going to convict the world that they don't believe in him (sin). He's going to convict the world that they're not righteous—they fall short of the glory of God. And he's going to convict the world—lastly—"concerning judgment," verse 11, "because the ruler of this world is judged." The ruler of this world has already been sentenced. He is the one who is the archetypal rebel. You want to talk about the rebel—the second point of our overall outline of the Bible is "people rebelled." Who was instrumental in that? The key rebel of the universe who sinned before we ever get into the book of Genesis—someone there that said, "I don't want to live under the authority of God; I want to get outside of that and be my own authority." That has been indicted; that has been judged by God. And if you want to align yourself with that—and you want to recognize that though you should bow the knee to Christ, though you don't live up to righteousness, you want to continue outside of the Lordship of Christ—well, there's judgment to come for you.

Now that sets up someone to respond rightly to the gospel. But that conviction, the Bible says, isn't going to happen just by people speaking about the gospel. It's going to happen when the Spirit gets involved and convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We have to have his involvement in this.

Now, that's where we're going to go, I suppose, in this message. We won't need to take long because it's not hard to understand, but I think the place for us to start—as a pastor, I'm looking at this text not as an expositor per se this morning, looking at every phrase and taking the form of the sermon from these verses—but I'm saying if the theme of what we're setting up—the ministry of Christ in Nazareth and Capernaum—is summarized by just the statement about the power of the Spirit being involved in this, then I want to step back and say, “Okay, we're going to talk about evangelism and the Spirit's role in that, and the whole point is for him to convict rebels to be submissive to Christ.” I want to make sure before we ever start—because how tragic it would be for us to get excited about seeing God and his Spirit convict other people to become Christians and us, at the end of our lives, find out as we stand before God, we weren't ever Christians to start with. “Oh, that wouldn't happen.” Oh, it happens all the time. And Jesus warned us of that. They're the most frightening words in the Bible—I quote them all the time. Sermon on the Mount—Jesus said, “Many will come to me on that day”—not a few—a lot—“and say, ‘Lord, Lord.’” Those are the words of recognizing Christ apparently as my King, but in reality they weren't. And Christ will say, “Depart from me—I never knew you.” And they'll come back with their résumé of stuff they've done, including—I'm assuming—many people in that line saying, “I even shared the gospel with people.”

I'd hate for that to be the reality for us. So allow me this morning as your pastor—if indeed I am—let me just spend a little time saying number one on our outline: Are you sure you've yielded to his conviction? You need to be sure you have yielded to the Holy Spirit's conviction in your life. “Oh, come on, Mike. I wouldn't be at church on a Sunday morning, missing out on brunch, if I weren't saved.” Well, that's nonsense. A lot of churchgoers are lost. I want to guard you from that.

“You know, Compass Bible Church—it's so insulting—they're always making us question whether we're Christians or not.” I've heard it. I've heard what you guys are saying behind my back. I don't apologize for that. And it's not intended to be insulting. I'm not saying you're stupid because surely, you know, I just have to repeat this because maybe you didn't get it. Not saying that at all. In fact, there are some really, really, really smart people that have missed the point. Jonathan Edwards—have you heard of him? You should have. If not, you've got Wikipedia on your phone—you should look him up real quick. Jonathan Edwards—one of the most brilliant thinkers America's ever produced—president of Yale; so many other things—so smart. This guy who became instrumental in what's called the Great Awakening here in America—here's a guy that grew up with an appetite to read Christian books, an appetite to read the Bible; I mean, a discipline in his life to be praying in a disciplined manner and devotional ways every day. And he was a person who so experienced the love of God in his life—at least this is how he stated it—that he wanted other people to experience that as well. He was an evangelist of sorts. He was out there saying, “You need to experience the love of God the way I've experienced the love of God.” And he was out there trying to get as many people in this as he could. Problem is he looks back on his life and he said, “You know, during that period of my life when I was doing all that, I wasn't saved. I'd never truly had the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I wasn't converted.” He writes about that in his life later as he looks back on it, and he says, “Yes, I was attracted to Christ. Problem is, I'm convinced that many are deceived with such attraction to Christ, mistaking those feelings for real conversion.”



If a guy as brilliant as Jonathan Edwards can go through a period of his life where he's evangelizing people—trying to get people to become Christians—and he looks back and says, "You know what, I had never experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit," then I don't apologize to say it's good for all of us to test ourselves to see if we're of the faith. Very important for us to do that periodically.

How about Charles Haddon Spurgeon? He's a pretty sharp guy, too. If you want to go to a church with a smart pastor, you should drop this one and go to his church—if he's in town. He was a really effective leader. One of the reasons he was so good at it—in part, at least humanly speaking—is because his dad was a pastor and his grandfather was a pastor. And he grew up in church, brilliant mind, taking notes, thinking carefully through everything the preachers would say—his dad and his grandpa. And he had such a zeal that people put the Word of God into practice—which is what made him later in life a great preacher—that he was so zealous for it that when people he would see in town would not be putting into practice the things that his dad and grandfather taught, he was known for going up and rebuking them. Little punky teenager—you can see him, right? "You're not doing what my dad said at church." Now, he wanted people to be under the Lordship of Christ—that was his thinking. Problem is he looks back on it and says, "You know, all those years I was doing that, I was never saved—not a Christian. I never had the conviction of the Holy Spirit in the way that transforms my life, because I was truly convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment in my own life." It wasn't until a snowstorm one day—if you know Spurgeon's conversion story—he couldn't get to his own church. He sneaks into this church just off the main road there. The pastor couldn't get to church, so some second-tier guy who wasn't even on staff of this tiny little church gets up and tries to fill in the pulpit, and he preaches very simply from the Word of God. And guess what took place that morning? True, real conviction of the Holy Spirit in his life. He later writes about it and says this: "My spirit's... oh, its chains finally broke into pieces. I felt that I was emancipated in my soul. I felt like I was an heir of heaven. I finally was a forgiven one, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set on the rock. Between half past 10 in the morning when I entered the church and half past 12 when I was back at home again, what change had taken place in me." Now there's a guy—lot of Bible in his head, a lot of ministry under his belt as a teenager, evangelist, if you will—not saved. Not until God got a hold of his heart.

You want the extreme example of this? I suppose you should take Martin Luther as an example. Here's Martin Luther—a brilliant student, off to Bible school, off to seminary, getting his doctorate, and then preaching in the seminaries—if you will—as a doctor of theology, preaching classes on the book of Romans, teaching classes to his students on the book of Galatians, and teaching classes on the Psalter—the Psalms. If you had a question about the Bible, you should talk to Dr. Luther about it. The problem was, with all of that—in his mind, wanting desperately for people to come under the tutelage of God's Word and understand and interpret rightly God's Word—he looks back on those years and says, "I was never a Christian. Wasn't saved." He writes about it this way later in life: "At last, finally, meditating day and night, and by the mercy of God, I began to understand for the first time the righteousness of God as a gift of God by faith, and here I felt as though I was finally entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had finally been flung open." There's a guy that was teaching the Bible.



You want an extreme example of what I'm trying to talk about though—the evangelist—you should consider John Wesley. More—the Wesley brothers, John and Charles—John was the preacher, Charles was the songwriter. And John was so involved in evangelism that he was involved in a missionary trip across the Atlantic Ocean from England to America to win Native Americans to Christ—when he finally recognized, “I’m not saved.” He sat in a boat with people—maybe you know his story—in a storm out on the ocean. And he was there with some Moravian missionaries that were on the boat, and he was there ready with his Bible to convert people to Christ and to have them bow the knee to the Savior. And he’s in the boat watching this storm brewing worse and worse, and he’s freaked out of his mind. He’s looking at these people across the way—even the children of those people—calm. And he inquired about it and they said, “We’re not afraid to die. We know where we’re going.” He was so struck by that—and convicted. Finally the Holy Spirit got ahold of his life that he realized, “Man, I am not where I need to be.” This is not growth. This is not “second blessing.” This is not moving into some second-tier Christianity. I have not been saved. He writes later about it: “It was about a quarter before nine, while he” (the preacher) “was describing the change which God works in the heart by faith through Christ, that finally I felt the change in my own life, and I really, truly trusted Christ—Christ alone, Christ alone for salvation. And an assurance was given me in that hour that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” That’s the testimony of a missionary on the way to doing missions work.

Now, Edwards, Spurgeon, Luther, and Wesley—if you’re going to create a debate team, I’m thinking that’s a good team to have right there. Those are some smart guys. And there’s not one of them—if I could resurrect them, bring them back here on the stage—who’s going to say, “Oh, Pastor Mike, stop making people question whether they’re saved or not.” I’m not trying to inject doubt into your life—know my heart on this—I’m not. I just don’t want to be your pastor, looking out at your faces every weekend for the rest of my life, seeing you in the line at the end of time, standing before Christ and having him say, “Depart from me—I never knew you.” I don’t want you to go through the next six weeks of sermons, getting excited about sharing a message that’s supposed to bring the conviction of the Holy Spirit for salvation in other people’s lives, and you find out some point down the road you were never saved. So let’s deal with that right up front.

Remember in Matthew—there’s a great line, and we love to quote it because it’s almost so endearing to us the way Jesus analogizes the Father giving gifts to us the way a father on earth would give gifts to their children. Remember that? He said if a father is asked by his kid, you know, for a loaf of bread, he doesn’t give a stone; if he asks for a fish, he doesn’t give a snake. “If you, being evil, then, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does the heavenly Father know how to give good gifts?” That’s the one we often quote. But Luke also records that, and he goes on to add this line: “Don’t you know he will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” That’s a great line, because what’s the point? Luke’s trying to underscore the fact that the greatest gift of all is for you to have the Spirit in your life that will convict you of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The answer is—I mean, we can go through the outline of the gospel (which we should; hopefully you’ve heard that a hundred times in this church)—when it comes down to it, it’s whether or not the Spirit has had his way in your heart to convict you of the fundamental problem you have before God.



So stop talking about whether you grew up in a church, went to some class, graduated to some ribbon, did some kind of missions work, you know enough Bible verses, you've taught a class—you've done whatever. That doesn't matter. What really matters is whether or not you have had the effect of the thing that we're going to talk about you trying to see effected in other people's lives—have you been convicted by the Spirit? Does he take up residence in your life? So don't be insulted by us starting there. You and I need to be sure that we've yielded to the Spirit's conviction.

Now, in our text, obviously the result of successful evangelism in terms of the message going out and hearts being moved from being rebels to glorifying the King depended on the Spirit. Before we briefly touch on that, let's think about the way it is injected into the middle of the phrase that talks about Jesus going from Judea to Galilee. He goes there "in the power of the Spirit." And if I can, let me break that down into a subset—or at least something that must be inclusive in that, though it's not the totality of what that sentence means and what the phrase means—and that is that we know that Christ is certainly in sync and in step with the Spirit. And for him to go to Capernaum and Nazareth—not to mention Sychar on the way—and to share the claims of his Messiahship clearly is in concert with what the Spirit wants to do in his life. Now, he didn't need to be convicted by the Spirit of sin, righteousness, and judgment the way we do because we're lost and sinful and we need to be saved. But he is modeling for us that he is following the directions of the Holy Spirit. Let's put it down that way.

Number two: we need to resolve to yield to the Spirit's direction. Resolve to yield to his directions. And I put an "s" on that because there are a lot of things as it relates to his direction. But let's start with the evangelistic promptings that we see Jesus following in Luke 4:14–15. I just want to say, "Okay, great, Mike. You know what, you've talked again about whether or not we're Christians," and I'm sitting here saying, "I know that I know that the Spirit of God is active in my life. I know that I'm saved. I see the evidence of that. I've responded to it. I felt that conviction. I know what it means to repent and put my trust in Christ." Second thing then—we're going to talk about being evangelists. I just want to know: have you really yielded to the conviction and the direction of Christ in lesser ways? Not just to be saved, but to be who God has called us to be—specifically in context, he's being sent. The Spirit of God is directing Christ and sending Christ and guiding Christ to share the claims of Christ to the synagogue in Nazareth. Are you responsive to those directions in your life?

Let's start with the biggest thought of all, and that is that you are directed by the Spirit to even think that way—as an evangelist. If you read any of the things that we did to advertise this series, I wrote in the opening line there that I know that a lot of us don't picture ourselves or see ourselves as evangelists. I tried to say that in hopes that this series would do something to help you with that. I want to tell you: whether you view yourself that way or not, you are that. He saved you to do that. Oh, there are other things he saved you to do, but he saved you to take the message to other people. That's your identity.

Just one text on this, if you would—turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5. It doesn't come more clear than this. If we're going to break this down into a sub-point, I guess you could say this: have you yielded to the Spirit's directions just to be an evangelist—that you are an evangelist, that you are someone to take the good news to neighbors, friends, coworkers? That is your identity in Christ. Now, I know a lot of times you can read passages in Scripture about sharing the gospel, and if you're really shrewd and trying to wiggle out of the responsibility, you can say, "Well, it looks like a lot of this is directed to the apostles, and that's their career; that's kind of like looking at passages that are directed to pastors, and it really doesn't relate to me, and let's just let the professionals deal with this." Here's a passage you can't wiggle out of. The encompassing words—the superlative words that describe all of us—are clearly in this text. So I want to make this clear. This is a passage that really relates to all Christians. Couldn't be any clearer than this.

Verse 15—you want to talk about an all-encompassing sentence? Look at this: 2 Corinthians 5:15—"He died for all,"—are you with me on this?—"that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised." Now is there any way you're going to wiggle out of that verse? No. He died for me so that I would no longer live for me but live for him. Now he's going to unpack that. But I need to start there: I'm a Christian. I have had the benefits of the cross and the resurrection. I've been brought under the Lordship of Christ. I know—because of the death of Christ, I know by this verse and several others—I'm supposed to live for him—his purpose. I can be a mom; I can be an accountant; I can be an architect—doesn't matter what my job description says or what my business card says. I know that my fundamental identity is I'm a servant of Christ. That's who I am. I serve God.

Verse 16: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." What's the point? You may be a mom; you may be an architect; you may be an accountant, but that's really not your primary identity anymore, and we're not going to regard you as that. We're going to regard you as brothers and fellow servants of God. "Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh,"—he was the rabbi and all of that—"we regard him thus no longer." Now we just see him as the focus of our service.

"Therefore"—let's think about your life—"if anyone is in Christ,"—how broad is that? Anyone. Everyone. "He is a new creation." If you're a real Christian, you're a new creation. "The old has passed away"—which obviously includes a lot of things, but in context it includes your identity according to the flesh. You may still be an architect and may still be a mom; you may still be an accountant. But you're more than that—primarily, you're a new creation. "The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

"All of this is from God,"—he's going to get more specific now—"who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Died for you so that you live for him—



your identity now, whatever your job description, is not seen primarily as that (that's secondary). Your primary identity as a servant of Christ now is one that is reconciled to him so that you now are to take that message of reconciliation to your sphere of influence—wherever it is that God has planted you.

“—that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them,”—that's the good news of the gospel. I can be saved. I don't have to end this life alienated and hostile from God's favor; I can be reconciled to God—“and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” Your job, my job, all of our jobs. “Therefore,”—bottom line identity—it isn't the old accountant, architect, mom thing; it's “ambassadors for Christ.” You represent Christ. “God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Can we stop with the modern evangelical nonsense that evangelism is just doing good or just helping people or just—I don't know—living out the character of Christ and “only using words when necessary”? Nonsense. It's about God making his appeal through you, as you speak up for him—having those in your sphere of influence hear from you that they need to be reconciled to God. How's that work? How's that “not counting the sins against us” work? Verse 21: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin”—Christ, who knew no sin; he was the innocent Lamb of God—“so that in him”—if you identify with him by faith—“we might become the righteousness of God.” Accepted. Reconciled now—from hostile to friend; condemned to forgiven.

Have you yielded to the directions of the Holy Spirit in terms of your basic fundamental identity? You and I carry around different business cards, but we have the same fundamental identity: we live for God—servants of God. And we're called to represent Christ in this world—not just with your life, but with your words.

And again, let me just address some of the objections: “It's so out of step to start thinking of myself”—if I'm you—“thinking about myself in your context as an evangelist.” Here's a little insight into kind of how I view these people that often use this phrase—it seems like the kind of open-minded, progressive-thinking, avant-garde of our day (rebellious avant-garde of our day)—they love to use this phrase when it comes to the moral issues of our day: “I just want to be on the right side of history.” Have you heard them say that? “We'll be on the right side of history.” In other words, they see the trajectory of our society and they say, “I want to kind of get ahead of this, and I want to have this view because eventually everyone will have that view, and so I want to adopt it now. I'll be an early adopter on this concept.” Which leads them into some real moral quagmires, by the way.

And all I'm saying is, whenever I hear somebody use that line of logic, I go, “Yeah, me too. I want to be on the right side of history. I'm all about that.” Problem is, I'm not thinking 50 years in



advance in American history. I'm thinking 5,000 years in world history. And what's the Bible say about that? The Bible says, "The kingdoms of this world"—one of my favorite verses, as you know—"will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." I want to be on the right side of history. For me to be an evangelist in a lost world that mocks me when I bring up the topic of Christ—do it all you want. Here's what the Bible says in Philippians 2: one day your forehead will be pressed against the ground, you will bow down before him, and your tongue will confess, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Everybody—those in heaven, those on earth, those under the earth—everyone is going to come around to this perspective. Not everyone will be saved—everyone will come around to this perspective. I want to be an early adopter on the kingdom of God. I'd like to have the concept in my mind, knowing that though it feels like the minority view now, it will be the universal view one day. So I'm going to yield to the direction of being a bit out of step with our culture and representing Christ. I'll accept his view of my identity as someone that proclaims the Lordship of Christ now and bows my knee to Christ—the One who will eventually be bowed to by everybody.

I talked about doing good, and I don't mean to minimize that. A lot of people see evangelism as being a good person. It's not—it's way more than that; it's opening our mouths with the message of reconciliation. But let me not minimize that, because here's the problem: if you have the message of reconciliation coming out of your mouth at work, but your life is incongruent with that, we've got a problem.

One passage on this and that's all, but turn with me, if you would, near the end of the Bible, to Titus. Not that far near the end—Titus 2. Titus 2. If you don't think about it for a second—Timothy and Titus—these are books written by Paul to pastors. Timothy is a pastor in Ephesus. Titus is a pastor on the island of Crete, which was known—even we can gather this from the letter he writes to Titus—as a pretty morally corrupt and very licentious culture. He's teaching them, "Listen, you've got the message—the doctrine of Christ now is in your mouth." Their identity: it's assumed, and it's even hinted to throughout the book. Like every Christian on the planet, you're called to take that message to a lost world and, in your culture, get out there and bring that message to them. "But be sure your life accords with the message. Make sure that your behavior is in sync and congruent with the message." That's important because, as the Bible says elsewhere, when we don't practice what we preach, we become a cause for blaspheming, the Bible says. And all you need to do is open the pages of the paper today—they're looking for Christians to be hypocrites so that they can broadcast it to discredit our message. But the message is true. The challenge for us is to make sure that if we're going to preach about submitting to the Lordship of Christ, that our life reflects that we're submitting to the Lordship of Christ. You follow that?

Now, like a lot of passages, we often just cherry-pick verses out of a chapter, but you need to see that from verse 1 to verse 10 in Titus 2, we've got a nice set of bookends in verse 1 and verse 10 that tie all of this together. Don't miss this. Look in verse 1: it says, "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine." He's going to tell Titus the pastor: when you get up there, be teaching things about their behavior that is going to accord with sound doctrine—it's going to match; it's going to fit it. Drop down to verse 10—the last line: "so that in everything they may adorn the



doctrine of God our Savior.” So whatever he’s talking about are things that fit, that make it look right, that are connected.

Now, let’s read the whole thing. Titus 2:1—“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” Stuff like this, verse 2: “Older men are to be sober-minded”—come on—“dignified”—not silly, not ridiculous, not grown-up kids; “self-controlled”—you don’t have addictions; you’re not into all that stuff; you’re not reliant on those kinds of things; “sound in faith”—you know what you believe—“in love, and in steadfastness.” “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers”—you’re not going around as the gossips and stabbing people in the back—“or slaves to much wine.” You’re self-controlled as well. “They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,”—make sure that these Christian women in the church are loving their husbands and their children; their families are intact—“to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands,”—now here it is in the inverse: we want lives that accord with sound doctrine—“that the word of God may not be reviled.”

“Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” Come on—grow up. “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned,”—so that (here it is again) “an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.”

“Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,”—what kind of employee are you?—“not pilfering,”—not cutting corners, not cheating on your taxes—“but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” The point is: your life and my life should accord with—should sync with—should adorn—the message that we’re preaching. Because there’s nothing worse than you starting to open your mouth about the gospel at work, in your extended family, in your neighborhood, and all they can see is the glaring inconsistency between you calling them to submit to Christ and they watch your life be out of sync with Christ.

You need to yield to the Spirit’s directions to be evangelists, and you need to yield to the Spirit’s directions to be an integrous evangelist—one who’s not contradicting with your life the words that we speak. And of course Christ was the paragon of that—the model of that.

I don’t have time for this passage, but I’d love for you to jot it down, note-takers: 2 Timothy 2:21–26. Let me say this: we need to go a step further than what I’ve just said. I’m not just concerned that you live a life that backs up the message that you speak—the life that your non-Christian friend can see. That’s important. But there’s more to your life than your non-Christian friend sees. There are parts of your life your non-Christian friend will never see, and that needs to be submitted to the



Lordship of Christ as well. You need to be pursuing holiness in those areas. You need to be following and submitting to, yielding to, the directions of the Holy Spirit in your thought life—even though your non-Christian friend will never see your thought life. Why? Because according to 2 Timothy 2, God—who sees everything—is deciding who to use for the privilege of evangelism, among other things, based on your life—whether it’s honorable or dishonorable. And that text says, “If you would cleanse yourself from what is dishonorable, then you’ll be a vessel for honorable use,” and the Master will pick you out of the toolbox, as I like to say, and use you for these divine appointments with non-Christians. And trust me, there’s nothing more satisfying or joy-filled, nothing more rewarding—both here and in the next life—than you being used to lead a string of people to Christ that you will not be ashamed of on the final day. And you know what? Part of whether or not God’s going to use you for that is based on your life. You’ve got to be someone who’s not known—in that text it talks about quarrels and argumentative and all of that. You live a life that is not only in step with the gospel so that non-Christians don’t see you as a hypocrite, but let God see you as someone growing in grace and in sanctification so that he’ll use you for more evangelism.

There are two aspects to yielding to his direction. And of course Jesus in Luke 4:14 was obviously doing both. He was saying “no” to every temptation, and he was led by the Spirit—returning by the power of the Spirit—to the next divine appointments, evangelistic appointments, that the Spirit was guiding him into.

Now, the obvious—number three, jot this down if you would in your outline: we need to expect his power (a little play on words here) to yield the results. The Spirit is the one who makes this happen. The power of the Spirit not only gets the message out there successfully but turns hearts from rebels to glorifying the King—glorifying Christ. “He was being glorified by all.” The Spirit of God accomplishes that.

Now, that’s an obvious thing—we don’t need to spend much time on that. But if you want a great passage to study—it’s not on the discussion questions on the back, so it’s worth jotting down, extra homework assignment: 2 Corinthians 2:14–3:6. It’s a bit of a section over two chapters. 2 Corinthians 2:14 through 3:6. And if you would just read that two or three times—slowly and thoughtfully—that would be enough. And think with this in mind: when I’m doing evangelism—when I’m willing to speak up and do the job God has called me to do—I recognize that when it comes down to it, what God is asking me to do is be a conduit for him to do what only he can do. You follow that? I’m asked to share the message. The Holy Spirit is the one—his power is the one that changes hearts. It’s the one that changes rebels into people that glorify Christ. I can’t do it. Now, I’m called to be involved in it, but I can’t accomplish it any more than me going to the morgue this afternoon and preaching there and hoping I’ll get a few “amens” out of the—look, the corpses. Not gonna happen. And the Bible says your non-Christian friends—according to Ephesians 2—are “dead in their transgressions and sins.” There’s not a single one of your non-Christian friends that has the ability to glorify God unless the Spirit gets involved. And no matter how eloquent your gospel presentation is, no matter how well you bone up on apologetics and have answers for all of their questions—that will never be something you can accomplish. It has to be



accomplished by the Spirit of God. He's the only one that can open blind eyes—to use the analogy of 2 Corinthians 4—when he says that the god of this age has blinded their eyes. I can't open those eyes. Now, I'm throwing the gospel grenade, as we often say; I'm putting out the seed like the sower. But the ability for that seed to take root and grow in that mind—I can't do it. And in that regard, it kind of helps me feel like, hmm, I feel better about this then. I recognize it's not inherent in me. I want to work hard at it; I want to be faithful to do it. But I realize this is something that the Spirit has to accomplish. Now, you know that. That's not revelatory for anybody.

Let me give you five things—real quick—that, if that's the case, then should be the natural extension of my thinking and activity based on the fact that the Spirit of God has to accomplish this.

Let's start at the very beginning, chronologically, of what's going to happen if I step up to do evangelism, and that is: I've got to have the opportunity. So let's put it this way.

Letter A: I need to pray for the Holy Spirit to provide me the opportunity—opportunity to share the gospel. That's what I'm talking about. I need to be praying—and I'm just challenging you for these five things: do this. Just pray to God—I dare you—"God, give me..." Just pray every morning when you get up: "Give me an opportunity that you have constructed and you have designed and you have scheduled to be able to share the gospel with someone today. Just give me that opportunity." If you pray that every day, you won't need to look for it—it'll be there. It'll be on your mind and God will present it. I mean, think of Philip in the book of Acts. I mean, here he is—talk about a divine appointment. You run into a guy—in this case the Ethiopian eunuch—reading the gospel—I'm sorry, reading what was the gospel, if you will—the gospel of Isaiah—reading Isaiah 53 in his chariot going, "I don't understand. Is the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" You want to talk about a teed-up evangelistic opportunity—there it was. And Philip's going, "Let me tell you about that." And off he goes. That's a divine appointment. I want divine appointments like that. You should want divine appointments like that. I know they're scary. I know you feel under-clubbed, overwhelmed, scared, nervous, and all that. Fine. But tell God, "If this is the Spirit's work, guide me into those opportunities." Just give me a divine appointment to share the gospel.

Number two: sometimes we get to those opportunities and we're so scared. Pray this one: pray for the Holy Spirit to give you boldness. Just pray, "God, I want you to give me the opportunity, and when I'm there, please open my mouth. Let me speak clearly and boldly." You see Paul asking for that a lot—to the Ephesians and to the Colossians: "Pray that I would open my mouth clearly and boldly, that I can state the gospel the way it ought to be stated." You need to pray that you would have the boldness to open your mouth. And you're going to see the opportunities teed up, and then you need to pray the Holy Spirit would empower you to talk. Pray the Holy Spirit would give you opportunities; pray the Holy Spirit would give you boldness.



Thirdly: pray that the Holy Spirit would give you accuracy—accuracy about the message. Now, that kind of has a sub-point to it because that should be easy. It's not mysterious; it's not mystical; it's not subjective. He wrote a book with all the instructions in it called the Bible. The gospel is in the Bible. You don't have to sit on a rock to figure it out; you just have to read it and know what it says about what it takes to be saved. Something obviously that we should all know and master. But a lot of people instead opt for our cultural colloquialisms like "asking Jesus into your heart" or "sinner's prayers" or "walking an aisle" or "coming to church." That's not the gospel. The gospel has to do with the substitution of Christ on a cross for my sin; has to do with his life for my life; it has to do with repentance and faith. Those are the biblical terms; we should learn the biblical terms—the biblical words; master the gospel—and then I'll have accuracy when I talk about it. Go to the Book. That's not mystical; that's not granted to me passively; it's you actively learning the instructions of the gospel in the Book that the Holy Spirit wrote. This is about the Holy Spirit's work—then pray for him to give you opportunities; pray for him to give you boldness; pray for him to give you accuracy.

Number four: I like to put it this way—pray that he'll beat you to the conversation. Not beat you in the conversation—beat you *to* the conversation. And here's part of this—that I know he's already done it. In part, he's beat you to the conversation because every person that you talk to has been designed—in their hardware and software—by the Holy Spirit. The triune God made these people. As Solomon said, he's created people with eternity in their hearts. As Romans 1 and 2 say, they've already been programmed by their conscience and the world that they live in to have an innate understanding that they have a holy God that they don't live up to. The Holy Spirit, in some way, has already beat you to the conversation—he already has. And you need to know that. And it helps me whenever I do evangelism. I know I'm not speaking some foreign dialect to these people. What I'm talking about, they already know. Oh, there may be some things that I say that turn on lightbulbs and clarify—I'm not saying that doesn't happen. I'm just saying when it comes to the need of their lives for Christ, there is something already designed in their own heart to know they need that. "Oh, my non-Christian friend is hostile. He doesn't seem like he needs that." Now I understand that. In Romans 1 and 2 it makes it clear: the only way that that is not evident is when they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. But he's already beat you to the conversation in that regard. But what I like to pray is: beat me to the conversation with all the prep work. I want their hearts to be ready. Now, I know sometimes I plant and sometimes I water. But, you know, when it comes to evangelism—particularly the next six weeks—my prayer for you is that you'll do some reaping. And that means that there's some stuff that's gone on already. I think of people—and so many people I know—I hear their testimony. One of the first questions I ask them when we get in a casual conversation: "How did you come to repentance and faith?" And I hear so many stories about the people and how God prepared them and worked and cultivated. And then finally the sower came and planted the seed, and they became Christians. I want to be the one who gets to see the joy of reaping. And to do that, I want to pray the Holy Spirit will have done a lot of spade work in their lives before I ever get there.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give the opportunities—he orchestrates and schedules that stuff. Talk to him. Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you boldness—he's the one who indwells you. Pray that he'll be active and get the words out clearly and boldly. Pray for accuracy—and that's more than



prayer; you need to study the Holy Spirit's Book so you'll be accurate about the message. And pray that he'll beat you to the conversation.

Lastly—couldn't be simpler than this, you hardly need to write this—pray the Holy Spirit will save them. I know it's not my work—the Holy Spirit's work—so I want to pray that he'll save them. Now, here's the thing about most evangelism: it doesn't happen in the middle of the conversation. Sometimes it does. But it's a lot like sermons. And I don't mean to say, "Don't be nice to me," but when you walk out the door—if you see me out there—and you say, "Great sermon, Pastor," then I'll be polite and I'll say, "Oh, thank you." But in my heart, you know what I'm thinking? This: I don't know yet. No clue. Why? Because preaching—and the preaching event—is really not where the rubber meets the road. Where the rubber meets the road is whether or not you do anything about it. So I don't know if it's a good sermon until you've had some time to live after the sermon is over to see whether or not you become a doer of the Word or only a hearer who deludes themselves. So when it comes to preaching, I don't know how well I've done—in terms of my preaching—whether or not you have put it into practice will determine whether it was a good sermon or not. Now I know that's all God's work, but I'm praying that I'll do my part and then, when it's done, you'll go out and put it into practice.

Same kind of thing in evangelism. I share the gospel with people—my heart is that when I have left you, regardless of how poorly I feel like I may have stumbled through some of it, I'm praying the truth that was presented will be used in your heart and the Spirit of God will save you. That's a work that takes place usually after the conversations we have. Pray for God to give you—the Holy Spirit to give you—opportunities, boldness, accuracy; to beat you to the conversation; and pray ultimately that he'll do the work of saving people.

Talked at the opening about compassion. I'm just praying that you have an increasing amount of it for the lost people in your life. You know, non-Christians—I've heard them say, and I've read it in the writings of non-Christians: "You know what? If I were a Christian and really believed what you guys believe, I'd live a whole different life regarding evangelism than all you Christians seem to be living. I mean, if I really thought that the message that I possessed would be one that would change the eternal destiny of other people, I don't understand why you Christians are so timid about this." Non-Christians are insightful enough to say that kind of thing to us. And I'm thinking to myself, "Yeah, we need to be bold." But a lot of that boldness comes from compassion—that I look at people, as Paul did in Romans 9 and Romans 10, and he says, "I'm just... I'm just broken up over the fact that these people are lost."

Pray that God—in his Spirit—would give you eyes for the harvest. Be sure you've yielded to his conviction—that you're a Christian. Resolve to yield to his directions—that you're an evangelist, hopefully one with integrity. And expect his power to yield the results.



So just stand with me as we let you go. Let's pray together.

"God, I sense the spiritual battle in the room—I have through much of the weekend here. This is a topic that I know a lot of people are just crossing their arms on, and they are not interested in sharing the gospel. I pray, God, that you'd break through some of that. I know many people are responsive, and that's great. But God, I pray that you'd get more of us that really claim to know Christ—we say that we're Christians. I pray that we'd start sharing the message of the gospel—the one that's in the Bible, not the one that we like to toss around that doesn't offend anybody. But our goal is not to offend people—obviously we want to be as gracious as we can—but it's hard, really hard. The temptations that we have to want to replace the message of repentance and sin and judgment—we want to replace it with things that completely miss the point. So give us boldness, God, to lovingly care enough about people to tell them the truth.

"Now, God, a lot of times they'll shut us down, and that's fine. As Paul used to do—he'd sometimes just, you know, say, 'Your blood's not on my hands anymore—I can move on,' or as Jesus and the disciples said, 'I can kick the dust off my feet and go to the next village.' But help us to find that right low-hanging fruit, as it were—that concept of those that are ready to hear it, who've been cultivated by your Spirit, maybe by other people who have planted and watered. Give this church—and a massive percentage of this church—the opportunity to reach some people, to see them brought into the kingdom under the Lordship of Christ; turned from rebels and hostile toward their Maker to people that are reconciled to their Maker. That isn't going to happen just by dragging them into church and having Pastor Mike talk at them. It's going to happen when we get out there where they live, where they work, where they play, where they do their things, and begin to speak to them about their need for you.

"So that in the next six weeks, I pray you prepare us and give us that sense of equipment—that idea of being ready and prepared—not trusting in ourselves, obviously, but feeling like we're ready, trusting, reliant on you. Open our mouths to see what we can do to spread the message of the kingdom as you work through us to reestablish it in this world. God, we look forward to the way you'll use us. We pray for good things to happen in the weeks and months to come. In Jesus' name, amen."