
Gospel Threads

Week 1: Gospel Intentionality

Key Question: *What does it mean to weave “Gospel Threads”, and why is this approach helpful to us as we consider evangelism?*

Evangelism in Context

- **The Command: Make Disciples**
 - **Matthew 28:18-20** ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
 - **Question:** What is a Disciple? What is Discipleship?
 - “A disciple ... is someone who learns the gospel, relates in the gospel, and communicates the gospel.”¹
 - “A disciple of Jesus follows in Jesus’ steps, doing as Jesus taught and lived.”²
 - My definition: The Spirit-empowered process of following Jesus, obeying Jesus, becoming more like Jesus, and investing in others to do the same.
 - Our church’s mission statement: *We exist to **delight in, display and declare** the glory of God, equipping his people to spread that delight to all nations through Jesus Christ.*
- **Disciples Receive & Believe the Gospel (Delight)**
 - **Mark 1:15** *“The time has come,” [Jesus] said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*
- **Disciples Declare the Gospel**
 - **Psalm 96:3** ***Declare** his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*
 - **Matthew 24:14** *And this gospel of the kingdom **will be proclaimed** throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

¹ Dodson, Jonathan K. Gospel-Centered Discipleship. Re:Lit. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012, Chapter 1

² Dever, Mark. Discippling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus. 9marks: Building Healthy Churches. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016, 13-14

- **Romans 10:14-17** ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? ... ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and **hearing through the word of Christ.***

- **Disciples Display the Gospel**
 - **1 Peter 4:11** *Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything **God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.*
 - **Matthew 5:14-16** ¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may **see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.***
 - **Question:** *What are some ways we can **display** that we are disciples of Christ?*

- **Not an “Event”, but a Way of Life**
 - Should salt lose its flavor?
 - **Matthew 5:13** *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*
 - Should a light stop shining?
 - **Matthew 5:14-16** ¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
 - We must take up our crosses daily; there’s never been a “passive” disciple.
 - **Mark 8:34** *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*
 - Sharing the gospel is a natural overflow of being a disciple. Christ intended it to be a way of life, not merely an event.
 - **1 Peter 3:15** *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. **Always** be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*
 - **Ephesians 2:10** *For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

- **Case Study:** Acts 8:1-2, Acts 11:19-21. Who planted the church at Antioch?
- **Case Study:** Phillip in Acts 8:5, 8:26-39, 8:40. Phillip was like a “gospel sprinkler”!
- **Obstacles to Evangelism**
 - Gospel Articulation
 - What challenges do we face in sharing the gospel?
 - “Turning the Corner” in Conversation
 - What difficulties are there in “getting to the gospel” in conversations?
 - Fear...
 - ...of what people think
 - ...of awkward situations
 - ...of failure
 - Lack of Delight in Christ
 - Before we can “display” and “declare” the gospel, a disciple must first *delight* in the gospel themselves.
 - **John 15:1-11** *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
 - Not knowing how to navigate the Spirit’s leading
 - **Acts 16:6-10** – The Spirit *prevented* Paul and Silas from preaching the gospel in particular regions. How did they know?
 - **Luke 10:1-12** – Jesus was aware that some would receive and others would not; there was freedom to “stay” and freedom to “leave”.
 - Paralysis by analysis – not knowing where to start, so we don’t.

Threading the Gospel into Our Lives

- **The Idea:** There are many “fields” of evangelism in which we can proclaim the gospel.
 - Common Challenge: It’s not often that we can simply plunge into a full gospel presentation upon a first interaction or as we pass in the hallway. Sometimes, however, we wait far too long to bring up spiritual things.
 - Some patterns (like door-to-door or on-the-street evangelism) may be effective patterns for etching away at our own fears and growing in boldness, but it’s not the only way to be effective in proclamation. As a matter of fact, anywhere from 60-90% of Christians cite a “friend or relative” as God’s means of having led them to Christ.³
 - We see *connecting* for relationship as a key method that Jesus develops in his disciples, both in their own spiritual journeys and in his instructions as he sends them out (see Luke 10:1-12).
 - While we should certainly be willing and available to participate in all kinds of evangelism, the most consistent field for sowing seed is our own relational sphere.
 - **Active Spheres:** Spheres we create through intentionally placing ourselves in the path of non-believers (International Connections, Caring Center, Street Evangelism, etc.)
 - **Passive Spheres:** Spheres we create through everyday life (neighbors, grocery store, coffee shops, pool with the kids, waiting at bus stop, etc.)
 - Both can be intentional!
- **The Key:** We need to develop habits of intentionality in our speech and actions that open pathways to share the gospel. We trust the Spirit to open the right doors (Colossians 4:3), but we are called to push on the doors to see which ones may open.
- **The Method: Weaving Gospel Threads**
 - **The Threads:** Gospel themes that we bring up intentionally and as an overflow of our own relationship with Christ, prayerfully asking the Spirit to open doors through our obedience in glorifying the Lord.
 - **The Fabric:** Our everyday lives and the relationships that exist therein. What people will we see as we commute to work? When may we see our neighbors? How can we structure our lives to maximize these opportunities to connect?
 - **The Needle:** Our obedience to display and declare the gospel as an overflow of our delight in Christ.
 - Stirring the fount of affection through daily discipline (John 4)
 - The Old Cliché: What Would Jesus Do? (service & character)
 - Prayer for Open Doors (trusting in the Spirit...ahead of time)

³ <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2014/what-person-led-you-to-faith-in-christ>

- Intentional Preparation (knowing how to articulate the gospel)
 - Trusting the Spirit's Leading
- **The Process:** Keep weaving threads until one opens the door to proclaim the gospel, trusting the Spirit to guide you.
- **What are the Gospel Threads?⁴**
 - The Character of God (Week 2)
 - ...What is God like?
 - The Sinfulness of Man (Week 3)
 - ...What is mankind's greatest need?
 - The Sufficiency of Christ (Week 4)
 - What did Jesus accomplish?
 - The Necessity of Faith (Week 5)
 - How can we be saved from sin's punishment?
 - The Urgency of Eternity (Week 6)
 - Why is a decision required?
 - The Hope of Transformation (Week 7)
 - What hope do we have for the future?

Lesson Summary

- Our call as Christ's disciples is to follow after Christ in proclaiming the gospel. We do this through displaying the gospel and declaring the gospel as overflows of our own delight in the gospel.
- While there are many effective ways to share the gospel, weaving the gospel into our everyday lives best broadcasts gospel seeds in contexts where opportunities for follow-up and relationship-building already exist.
- A great way to be intentional with day-to-day relationships is to weave gospel threads into conversations and through actions that reflect the person and work of Christ.
- The aim of weaving gospel threads is to develop habits of intentionality that we trust the Spirit will use to lead us to the elect.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

⁴ The first five "threads" are taken from David Platt's book by the same name, "Gospel Threads". You can download a free PDF of this book here: <https://radical.net/book/gospel-threads-2/>