

ACTS

Disciple-Making: Show the Word
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DISCIPLE-MAKING: SHOW THE WORD **Acts**

Go ahead and flip your Bible open to the book of Acts, right at the very beginning. Show the Word. This is a phrase that was coined in front of us back in 2007, and it was when we were looking in the Word together, and David was unpacking a series on what it means to really make disciples and this word...this phrase "Show the Word" came out. What does it mean? Well, in a few simple words, what it really means is the demonstration of your salvation with your one life.

I'm sure that, if I did a test this morning on the components of disciple-making, and I said, "Okay, fill this out guys, and let's walk through it," and you spell it out for me...the whole "share, show, teach and serve..." that you would score well because that is what you are. I am looking at a group of assembled high achievers. Bless you. I know you, and I am thankful for the grace of Christ in you, but what does this really mean? So, this is where I want to press in closely for us.

I want to press in closely because you are and I am...we are prone to self-deception. We are prone to deceive ourselves about what showing the Word really means. I have, and you have, major blind spots about this, and there are blind spots because we pattern our lives around comfort points, kind of around our own little ironclad constitution. What I mean by that is that oftentimes the patterns of our lives are really based in a variety of different things; either our early life in our parents, what our cultural norm is, what we think everybody is probably watching and expecting from us. Some of our patterns right now are birthed from the times of our lives before we trusted Christ, but this Word speaks to us about this.

It addresses us. Any passage, just pick a passage...Hebrews 4 comes to mind, "*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, able to disclose the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" This Word, if we correctly apply this Word, what we can expect is that it will cut right on into our bones. It will cut down the sacred cows in our life and the shrines that we have built because of our past patterns. This Word will speak to us if it's correctly applied to us.

So, that's what I want us to do. I want us to look together, and I don't want us to deceive ourselves, and I don't want us to fill in the blank about showing the Word. What I want us to do is listen to what the Word tells us, and so, you guys together...we have been exploring Acts, and if you think this is really bad, and you go, "Ah, we've already read Acts and now we're rereading Acts?" A brother that I know reads the New Testament every 30 days. So, it's really okay to repeat. We will gain well from this.

We must see His initial movement.

So all right, let's jump in here...showing the Word. Let's jump right in, Acts 1:4-5. Take your Bible; let's go to the beginning of the book right there. Acts 1 starting in verse 4: *"And while staying with them,"* or we could say eating with them, *"he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John,'"* that's John the Baptist, *"baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

Here's the deal: Luke's giving a snippet of a past conversation. We really don't know how many hours or days are in between verse 5 and verse 6, but we'll talk about that more in just a moment. Just think about this: so, [Jesus] has, basically, told His disciples to stand still, and in their minds, there is a giant pause button that has just been hit. "Wait, wait." So, it's kind of Groundhog Day for them until something breaks loose; like they're waiting for them to come out and show the shadow or whatever.

The deal is, Christ is saying, "Stand here, something has to happen first." Just to kind of correlate this for us: you guys that are parents...don't you wish you had a pause button for your kids? "Stand right there. Just wait a minute." Even while you go to get something out of the oven or the refrigerator or while you go to the restroom. Guys, you don't know what I'm talking about, but I bet the ladies in this room do. "If you would just stand there for a minute, hold on, hold on."

It's kind of what Christ has told them. Why would we do this? Why would we want to hit the pause button with our kids? Here's why we'd want to hit the pause button. It's because your perspective is better than theirs. You know more than they know. You've looked ahead. You're saying, "Okay, the consequence of this action, if they don't stand still, it's not going to be good. So stand there."

Christ has told these men to, "Stand still until you hear from me. You see my power." So, all right. Let's read in verses 6 through 10. "I'm going to change everything," is what He says. Verse 6,

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Let's go forward, verse nine,

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing in heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

It's a dead giveaway into their thinking.

Just like kids, you know why they're thinking like this? Why they're thinking in earthly kingdom terms is because they are thinking like we think. The Law and the Prophets together, they have pointed toward a kingdom and these are Jews in Palestine. Why not? This is where it's all supposed to happen. That's what the Law says. That's what the Prophets say. We are expecting the kingdom, and they felt uniquely qualified to share in everything that that means. We think like they think.

Jesus pushes all this to the side right now. He tells them, basically, "Look, things are going to change, and your whole life is going to be about telling about me. It's going to testify powerfully about me." That's what Jesus tells them. So, before we ever start showing the Word, we must see His initial movement in a couple of incredible ways.

See His ascension upward.

First, see His ascension upward. The resurrected Son of God up and away. Reseated in glory at the right hand of God the Father. Even the word there, "cloud," indicates glory. Not just the resurrected Christ, the ascended Lord Christ. That's what they see here. These men are left. Their mouths are gaping open. That's the way we're left with this, and there are several points that we could walk off into, but I need you to see a couple things.

One is this; Christ's eternal glory demands our earthly gaze. The beginning of showing this Word is displayed in the action of God Himself. His desire first, not our desire first. In this display of Him being re-concealed in glory, it takes their complete attention, their complete notice and they are captivated. This morning, if there is an expectation in our heart that we will show this Word, we will not show this Word unless He has captivated our heart. This will not happen on our own initiative.

Christ's eternal glory demands our earthly gaze. It's no accident here in the Scripture, if you'll notice, that His ascension into glory happens before they choose the next apostle. It happens before the outpouring of the Spirit, which we're going to talk about in a second. It happens before. We have to see Christ's glory. The ascended Christ...with no ascended Christ, we have nothing. We have no reason. We have no right.

We have no resource to show the Word unless ascended Christ in glory has captivated us. That's where I want to press this morning. I want to say to you to be careful. Be careful, church, about building your life's actions around your own initiative. My mailbox and my inbox are flooded weekly with opportunities for us, either corporately as a church, or me personally, to join into some activity. They will wear you out.

The marketers have found the modern day church, and they know where the money is. It's like our eternal king is some political party to be joined or some summer activity that we do. This is not the case. I believe that we suffer—even in this 35242 zip code—we suffer from a low view of God. Let it be so that our view of Christ is ever elevating. See it's the ascended Christ who sets the stage for anything profitable in us.

All right, but whatever we think, whatever we're doing, whatever starts tomorrow morning or this afternoon, we have no real option but to see Christ magnified first in this. The reason for this is because God's will always arranges for Christ's worth to be exalted. God's will always arranges for Christ's worth to be exalted. We fall victim to this in our lives. In the modern day church, we fall victim to this. I mean that, if we're not careful, what we do is we come up with our own version; our own version of show the Word often means that what we want to do is show ourselves.

Our version of "show the Word" often means we really want to show ourselves. These men in Acts 1, they are there busting right all in there asking the question that all humanity asks when they go, "Hey, what's in this for me?" We should not really be so quick to judge them, because they're saying, "Where do we fit position wise, Jesus, in the grand scheme? Have you got a really good place for me here?" It is self promotion through gospel ministry. This is ludicrous. We are all pathologically self-centered, and if we are not careful to allow this Word and the ascended Christ to speak to us, we will form our own versions of what the "show the Word" phrase means to us, and it will not be from here.

There's really no correlation between deny yourself and promote yourself. Isn't one of the basic teachings of the Christian life that we can't live it? It's dangerous ground to want to be famous through Christianity. I would ask you to pray for this church, pray for her leaders, pray for each other that we are better disciples in secret than we are in public.

Now, granted some notoriety does come. It comes, even in this faith family, as a result of the Word's work in this faith family. There will be notoriety that comes. Notice, you are noticed church. I can tell you from looking across the landscape, you are noticed, and with notice comes good things, but with notice, also, comes criticism. I know you find this hard to believe, but I sometimes hear criticism. Even your delayed laughter on that would tell me you really don't get it.

You know, like I even hear criticisms directed at people who are just right in the midst of gospel work, like families who are adopting, criticism directed at them. "Well, they just do this to get noticed, to get attention." I want to tell you I have to laugh at this because, man, if I wanted to get noticed, and I'm sure that many of you could testify, that if you want to get noticed, there are less expensive and less troubling ways to get noticed than to adopt and to be subject to the gospel in that way. So, I would just really want to kind of shoot that down. All right, so if attention comes as a result of the Word's work in us, praise God, let it be such that Christ's character is exalted.

Experience His outpouring downward.

Next, we need to...obviously, God's will arranges for Christ's Word to be exalted. These are the ways, but next, experience God's outpouring downward. Experience His outpouring downward, His ascension upward; His outpouring downward. We're seeing the rushing wind of God Himself. If you've read this text, and we've really hoped you have this week, you're going to see it. He will move into...He will move through their lives. He will move through their lives, and this should not be a surprise to us because He has given them training runs. He's been giving them training runs.

Want to see greatness? Focus on the lowly. You want to experience life? Quit focusing on building up your life. The ministry of Jesus is always outward, always downward. It's no different when the Spirit comes in power on this New Testament church, and when we focus on our lives being outward and downward, what we are really doing is we are aligning with the pattern He has already shown. We align with a pattern He has already shown and set as He has poured out His life in front of twelve men.

If you look back at this Acts 1:8 passage, Jesus has told them about the coming power to be a witness. "Witness," that word, it begins the journey of 38 times in the New Testament that that word is used; 38 times. Witnesses testify verbally, to be sure. They testify verbally, but if you think about it with me, one of the primary things that attorneys will go for in any court situation...they will go after the credibility of the witness. Some of you are looking for that blank. He will infuse them with His life. That's what He will do.

So, does life match words? If you just spend 8 months out of your last year of life camped out in the first portion of this book, which we did...8 to 9 months, like we were living all in Old Testament days...you will see that we are faithless people. Left to ourselves, we have no credibility. In fact, we are not to be believed in the least. I can give you several hundred pages of evidence. We're not to be believed in the least.

In fact, the New Testament book of Romans says we're foolish, we're untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful, and although we know the ordinances of God, we know the rules of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, we not only do the same, but we also give hearty approval to those who practice them. In other words, we don't just do bad things, but we cheer people on that are doing them. That's our character. Now, how does that stack up in court?

This is why Christ had to infuse them with His love. Jesus Christ has all the credibility. This is where Acts 1:8 comes for us. He has all the credibility; He is the one to be seen. He's saying, "You will receive power when my life fills your life." God is immersing us with God. That's what the word "baptize" means.

Acts 1:8, "You'll be baptized with me." He's immersing us with God. You know why? Because He wants our life to look like God, to look like Christ. That's what He wants because, based on your credibility and my credibility, our witness will not hold water. We will not show the Word with any credibility. It's based in the character of Christ.

Listen to what Watchman Nee...this is a brother, a Chinese brother who died in 1972 in a Chinese prison for the sake of his faith. Listen to what he says,

His, [that is the Spirit's] goal is to see Christ wrought in believers. So it is not merely that a man does certain things or speaks certain words, but that he is a certain kind of man. He himself is what he preaches. Too many want to preach without being the thing themselves, but in the long run, it is what we are and not simply what we do or say that matters to God. And the difference lies in the formation of Christ within.

Really, all we need to do is read on a little further, and we will find that there is no tract to hand out for this life. There is no giveaway that we can point to. Our lives are the giveaway. There is only a set of lives that God says, "I'm going to use to display my glory through, to display salvation through." That's what He has said, and it will not happen...just check it out.

When you read ahead, and I hope that you have been, it will not happen when we're standing in one stagnant place. It most likely will not happen. It probably will not happen one hour a week in your class while you are seated. In fact, we might even not really look like good church members when we show the Word the way Christ has pointed to it. We may not look like good church members at all. You may forgo a class, instead, for a life.

Our Empowered Response

All right, let's plow right in here and take a look at something else. All right, so we see, basically, His initial movement. Now, we're going to see our empowered response; our empowered response as we turn in this book.

We cannot miss the life interaction.

Flip over with me to Acts 20 really quick, Acts 20. We cannot miss the life interaction. We cannot miss the life interaction. Acts 20:17, David touched on this passage a couple of weeks back. "Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come him."

Then Acts 20:18,

And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set first in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink back from declaring you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

See, Paul is recounting his life, recent days. It's not a life lived in isolation. Hear it, not a life in isolation; it's a life in view of and alongside of other believers. He's probably been with them about three years. Listen to the language. Humility and tears; these are men crying in front of other men. That's weird. If we were really honest about it, there may be a major lack in our life where we are not alongside other believers, where there are not tears being seen about the gospel in our life by other people.

They know him. Of course they encourage him. Sure Paul talked in public. Sure he talked in public, but it says here that he talked in all their homes. Paul talked in their homes. He talked in public, but he says he talked in their homes. There was conversation. Yes, it was over coffee, but there's more. God talked through Paul's life as the whiteboard that the gospel is written on. God talked through Paul's life as the whiteboard that the gospel is written on.

This is what happens when we bring the gospel home. We bring the gospel home, and what we first find out is this is going to require more prayer. It's going to require more gifts of the Spirit because we're going to have to deal with issues and axes that people want to grind with us, and in fact, when it comes to how real it gets, one way to sum it up is the gospel is a messy business. All our slick human theories go right out the window when we begin this kind of life. Our trust in the Spirit of God and in the Word of God, that's really all we have.

It really happens when we watch each other in the midst of difficulty. You want to see the Word shown? Stand by your brothers and sisters in the middle of difficulty. You'll see your community group or your class, they might know what your address is, they might know where you live, but a small group around you, they know what's in your refrigerator because they've looked in there, because they've likely stood in your kitchen. You know why they're in your kitchen? They want to see God. So, show Him to them.

He's infused you with His life. Why can't you show God to them in your kitchen just like you can here? Yes, Paul talked like I'm talking to you, but Paul talked in their homes. So, the gospel's a messy business; the gospel is a together experience, obviously, the gospel's a together experience obviously. You're not saved on my merit, and I am not saved on your merits; neither are we saved on our friends' merits. "Together," though, here is the key word. Look with me real quick, Acts 1:2 really quick.

Back to the beginning, we're going to wear the pages out really quick. Acts 1:2 Jesus had given them commands for the Spirit to the apostles; He presented Himself to them. "Them," that's the word I want us to watch for. Acts 1:4, "*While eating with them,*" "*When they,*" in verse 6; verse 9, "*They were looking on,*" verse 10, "*They were gazing.*" Verse 21, "*One of the men who accompanied us.*" Plural words; Acts 2:1, "*They were all together in one place.*" It is really highly unlikely that 120 people wandered around all the time around. It's probably more likely that twelve men who followed Christ around had many more men who followed them around and saw His effect in them.

The gospel is a together experience; there's together talking, there's together looking, remember the whole gazing. "*They were gazing into heaven,*" together praying. Acts 4, flip there really quick. Acts 4 really quick. Verse 23, this is right after the first arrest mentioned in the book of Acts when they, Peter and John, were released. I'm in Acts 4:23; "*they went to their friends and reported what the priests and elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God...*" and what? A prayer comes out. Skip down to verse 29.

"Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled..."

"Together praying" is in here for sure, but there's also together traveling. Look at the references. Just write these down. We're not going to flip to them. Write these down; we won't flip. Peter and John in Acts 8 go to Samaria. Peter and John in Acts 8 go to Samaria. Peter with the unnamed ones, Acts 10 off to Joppa; this is where Cornelius is saved. Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13, Paul and Silas and Timothy, Acts 16; you can go back.

Now, fill in your name right here and someone else that is a believer beside you. See, there's a method to the madness about global mission. Why? Because, yes, show the Word to the people that you are going, flying, driving, boating, whatever it is to see...show the Word to them. Show the Word, yes, to the people that are alongside you in that journey. That's why we do it together. Just really quick, I have a real quick story.

You know, several years ago, 2004, first adoption journey to Ukraine, Vicki and I had the privilege of being in that trip with another brother and sister in Christ from this faith family. It is a beautiful thing to have another brother and sister by you, but there's awkward moments in that...embarrassing moments, funny moments. Like, we were trying to send some photos back home because our family members were really driving us crazy, "Can we see pictures of what's going on with y'all there?" In our little apartment we had that we were sharing, it was crawl up, not dial up; it was crawl up. So, we could not send pictures. We could not send pictures, so we were like, "Okay, we're going to go...we know there's an Internet café just down the street." We get there, and the Internet café...you have to picture something; I'm not talking about a place like you're thinking. I'm thinking combo post office, coffee bar, beers lined up across the back window, this kind of Internet café. This brother and I walk in, and we have snuck through the back alleys and our facilitator has warned us, "You know, it's taken a while for the message of communism's fall to make it from Germany to Ukraine, and I know it's 2004 but just don't be ridiculous Americans, okay?"

So, we sneak our way in, and we walk to the front, and there's one guy in the place. It's almost midnight, and my friend walks up in his best accent, he goes, "Me, American." This

brother in Ukraine looks up and goes, "I know." Like, "Yeah, I know. I saw you at the door, there was no fooling." Embarrassment...like, stupid things, but things that we remember, and we work alongside each other as the gospel is hammered out in us.

Spirit-led risk

All right, really quick, together traveling. Okay, Spirit-led risk really quick. Acts 9; Acts 9. Just hold your place right there and don't read this right now because you've read this account before, and so I'm going to tell you, little brother Ananias; little brother Ananias, he was never heard from previously. Acts 9:10-19, never heard from previously, never heard from again except in Acts 22 when Paul briefly recounts his blinding experience. Ananias, his life used to the max to unleash the intellect and life of Paul, the apostle, Spirit-led risk.

You want to see what it looks like? Imagine Paul's perspective. The great Pharisee praying. He is waiting on an unknown brother to come in there to pray for him, and believe it or not, Ananias did not show the Word by teaching a class or by even talking to his local church about it. There is nothing recorded in here that he said anything to the Damascus church. The Jerusalem church was going great. He doesn't bother to call them either. Imagine doing the will of God across this faith family without really having to bother to call Alma and say, "Hey, I want you to know what I'm doing for the gospel today."

This is what he does. An unknown brother named Ananias, talk about showing the Word, literally. Right in that passage, "Brother Saul, Christ has sent me to you to pray for you, to lay my hands on you because there's a job for you to do." Ananias...what we're missing here is that Ananias is going because he knows Christ has commanded, but he knows his life may very well be at risk, Spirit-led risk. Can Christ work in us? Can Christ work in us in this faith family warrant bold behavior by the people around us?

Sacrificial sharing

All right, one more way really quick. So, we've had Spirit-led risk, let's move on. Sacrificial sharing. You know this passage, Acts 4:32,

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each one as any had need.

One of these ways that the Word is shown is through sacrificial sharing, and before you check out right now, and you go, "Well, he is about to tell me that I need to liquidate everything." Before you do that, I want you to think with me just a minute. What are the resources that are already sitting in your life? I know we'd venture to say, looking across this room, that your home is probably one of your largest assets, and in this economy, it's probably one of your largest liabilities, right? So, why is it not the primary method and platform for gospel? Why is it not the primary way for you to show the Word?

Want to really show the Word? How willing are you to open up your home? We can open up short-term, but not just short-term, long-term. I can tell you that I know of many across this faith family, already, that are opening up their homes on a long-term basis. A long-term basis to allow people to live with them. This is a really good test for your disciple making, okay? Open up your home, share your home with someone.

Let me just give you one really quick illustration. In 2007, Vicki and I, at that point in time, we had six kids, and we are praying, "God multiply our lives. Use the gospel in us; show the gospel through us." She gets a phone call, and there's an exchange student, and his family situation has evaporated, and he's going to be here in "X" many days, and by the way, "Do you think you could host him? He's Ukrainian and that would totally fit in your family." So, I saw a not so small group of people flood my home on Saturdays and Sundays and help finish out my basement area, so that we could put one more person from another country under my roof for a period of time.

There are people across this faith family...they're probably still sporting some bruises from those days where they were helping to build out, in order for our family to show the gospel. This is what happens. Let me spin this story ahead. Just call him OP. I go to pick OP up from the airport...finally get the call. It's that day, and this Ukrainian exchange student is going to live with us. We've got six kids, and we have a little extra space, so let's bring the Ukrainian exchange student in and here's what happens. We bring him home, he has really good English; we get there, pour him some Coca-Cola like, "Hey, you know the classic American treat."

"Hey, OP, let's sit down and have a conversation." So, I sit down on the couch, and OP sits right here. If I would've turned my head, we would've kissed. See, this is what this means when it talks about Paul talking the truth from house to house. Sometimes, you may have to get a brother or a sister and say, "Like, your breath is bad. For the gospel's sake, do something." For him, I cannot let him go out into American culture, and when a guy is sitting on a couch and wants to have a conversation, for him to sit down like really close to him like that. It's like you have to coach him through the Bible things and the life things because this is what the gospel shown looks like.

All right, our setting is not really important. Our setting is not important, but Christ's use of our setting...your setting is infinitely important. Spin the calendar ahead really quick. OP, still there. It's homework night at the Nichols' house. I've got six kids and one exchange student, and we are working our way through, and, frankly, my college math, my high school math is struggling just because we're at a variety of different stages around that table.

Everybody is getting a little frustrated because Vicki and I are working our way around the bar and the kitchen table there in the kitchen area, because we were trying to get homework done for the night. The frustration level is rising because we cannot make it to everybody at the time that they would desire. It's just about to a boiling point, and it's then that the thought hits me, "What was I thinking?" Six kids, exchange student, and I know this is a real surprise to you, but my mind was running really fast. I'm envisioning dads across Birmingham and Hoover in recliners watching ESPN.

Like, even reading quietly...like, I would love to just read quietly instead of being...doing this, or maybe I'm on the computer, and maybe I could plan my retirement where I could retire on the beach. Like, when this thought came in my head, it was almost immediately, so much so that my eyes welled up. The counter thought...the counter thought, it was like, "Chris, you can get to the end of your life and you can have a lot of money piled up, or you can get to the end of your life and you can have a lot of people piled up." The second one is infinitely better. I am confident. I'm confident based on what this Word says that that is the case.

Now, fast forward one more time before we go to the next plan, and here, OP trusts Christ as a result of being around gospel ministry where the Word was shown. I remember his words to me. "It was though," he says, "It was though I was on a ladder, and I must get down," when he met Christ. That's what he communicated. His life up against gospel-believing lives shows the Word.

Simple methods, salvation motives

All right, moving on really quick; simple methods, salvation motives. You've heard me speak. You've heard David Platt speak of George Mueller, born in Germany...Prussia area. He moved to England, ministered to hundreds. Before George Mueller became a believer, he was lost; unashamedly lost. He was quite a notorious sinner, and he did not get saved in a class on how to be a Christian. Here's how he got saved. Listen to this. At the University of Hall, there were about 900 divinity students. He was in the seminary for crying out loud, and I'll tell you what ministered to him. You're going to hear it in a second.

All these were allowed to preach, but Mueller estimates that nine of them feared the Lord. One percent, wow.

One Saturday afternoon about the middle of November in 1825, I had taken a walk with my friend Beta, and on our return, he said that he was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a Christian where there was a meeting in the house of a Christian. On further inquiry, he told me that they read the Bible, sang, prayed and read a printed sermon. No sooner had I heard this, but it was to me as if I had found something I had been looking for all my life. I immediately wished to go with my friend who was not at once willing to take me for knowing me as a merry young man, he thought I should not like this meeting that was translated from Prussian.

That means he was a party animal, okay? He's thinking "I don't want to bring this sinner into this home. But at last he said he would take me." Describing the meeting, this is what Mueller said.

We went together in the evening, and I did not know the manners of the brethren and the joy that they have in seeing poor sinners, even in any measure caring about the things of God, so I made an apology for even coming. And the kind answer of this dear brother I shall never forget. He said, "Come as often as you please, house and heart are open to you." And after a hymn was sung, they fell on their knees and a brother named Kaiser, who afterwards became a missionary to Africa, asked God's blessing on the meeting.

"This kneeling down made a deep impression on me," is what George Mueller says. "For I had never seen anyone on his knees or had I ever prayed on my knees. He then read a chapter and a printed sermon for no regular meetings for expounding the Scriptures were not allowed in Prussia except when an ordained clergymen was present, and at the close, we sang another hymn, and the master of the house prayed."

This meeting made a deep impression upon Mueller.

When we walked home I said to Beta, "All we've seen on our journey to Switzerland, all our former pleasures are as nothing compared to this night." Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home, I do not remember, but this I know: I lay peaceful and happy in my bed. This shows that the Lord

may begin his work in different ways. He began a work of grace in me. That evening was the turning point of my life.

Showing the Word...showing the Word through an open heart, open Word, open prayer, open home.

Showing the Word grows out of Christ's love displayed in normal life circles. It does not require a lectern. It does not require a projector. It does not require going to an expensive conference or a retreat center out of town. It requires you opening up your life and showing the hope that is within you to other people. That's what showing the Word is. This is not complicated. The early church did not have to make sure that all the environments were right. In fact, look in this book. It's a disaster of an environment. Horrible things happening, people coming to Christ.

One quick passage, turn to Acts 4:13.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

David mentioned this Scripture last week, talking about our relationship to these uneducated men, and you see the rulers of these people. They're adding this up in their head. "Let's see: incredible spiritual power, no rabbinical school, no church talk, but evidently spiritual authority in their life and in their words." This verse even says "they were astonished." Their jaws were dragging. They're astonished. It was jaw dropping.

They're looking at these men. You want to astonish your kids in this room? You want to astonish your coworkers? Spend your life in devotion to Christ. Spend your life in devotion to Christ. Better than you know the NCAA brackets, better than you know who's on Oprah this week or Ellen. Better than you know who won American Idol. Spend your life in devotion to knowing Christ. That's how you can astonish your coworkers.

Get up earlier than they do. Ask God for salvation for them. Stop telling them what they ought to do with God. Show them what God is doing in you. This is what show the Word means. Ask grace from God to answer them softly when they say stupid things to you. Stay up later than they are. Read the Word. Let the Word shape your posture toward them. It says there is proof in these men's lives. Can we pray for lives that are surrounded by proof?

I want people in every one of your lives that can be touched and seen and felt that are a picture of the gospel showing through your life. I tell people this in impact every time we have it. Impact is four intense weeks of membership training for this faith family. You go, "Well, that's not in the Bible." I go, "Well, neither is a mega church with a million dollars in the budget either. So, don't get me started." Impact is necessary because we want people that walk in this faith family from the front door in to know what disciple-making looks like.

I tell them...I tell them, "It's not welcome to Brook Hills, join my program. It's welcome to Brook Hills, meet my person." I pray that for every one of you that is here. I want to know where your person is and see, there's not enough room in my life, nor in the people that are watching me in their life, for every one of these new folks that's walking into this faith

family to watch them. So, they're probably going to have to watch your life. So, I guess what I would say to that is, "Welcome to ministry all of you." Your life is custom designed to point people to Christ.

His Ongoing Involvement

God will use our lives as we live them.

Finally, His ongoing involvement; His ongoing involvement. God will use our lives as we live them. Really quick, flip to Acts 26. Acts 26, and I'm starting about verse 15. Listen in just a minute. Acts 26:15...Paul's recounting, once again, his salvation experience. Verse 15, "*And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose.'*" That blank right there: He appeared to Paul for a purpose. Look what else it says.

"*To appoint you as a servant and witness...*" There's that word again.

"To the things in which you have seen me and to the things in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles - to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins at a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

He appeared to Paul for a purpose: to open their eyes...to show them the Word. Basically, Christ has said, "I'm going to use the rest of your life, Paul, to show the Word, to tell the story of salvation, to add one more to the number in heaven one day."

It's not just about what has happened in Paul's life, it's about what's going to happen. He's not through showing him yet. Look down here at verse 22. Look at 22; "*To this day I have had the help that comes from God, so I stand here testifying...*" This is an Acts 1:8 moment. "Remember, I'm going to immerse you with God because I want God to be seen." That's what baptize means. I'm going to baptize you in God because, over your life, I want God to be seen, and right here, Paul says, "I can tell you that I have had the help that comes from God." So, you too can say with confidence in this room: you have the help that comes from God.

Look at verse 24, the reality of this is kicking in. Festus says, "Paul, you're nuts. You're out of your mind." Paul says, "No, I'm not nuts. I'm not out of my mind." Look down at 26. "*For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.*" The gospel of Christ was not performed in a corner. It was a public display. Let us not have lives that are lived in a corner. Let our lives not be hidden in a corner.

We are far too impatient.

Just because results don't happen today, it does not mean that they will not happen tomorrow. We are far too impatient with this. Long life, short life; one year, 80 years. This salvation in my life, listen to what he says in verse 27: "*King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.'* And Agrippa said to Paul, '*In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?'*" Look at Paul's answer: "*Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but all who hear me this day might become such as I am - except for these chains.*"

"Obviously, King Agrippa, I don't want you to be locked up like me, but to God that you be gloriously saved like me." That's what he wants.

When we begin to ask God for lives like this, we will begin to see God answer in visible ways like this.

When we begin across this faith family, starting on this side of the room and going to the back of the room...when we begin to ask God for lives like this, we will begin to see God answer in visible ways like this. Let's ask God. Let's ask God to give us lives that tell a story of His work.

Think of two things. One, I want you to think of a way that God has already given you grace in showing the Word. Maybe it's your family members; maybe it's your coworkers and thank God for His initial movement in your life that allows us to be seen. The second part of this response is I have the sense that this Word has said something to you, and there is a way in your heart and in your life that you know that there has been neglect about showing the Word. Let's ask God to give us lives, give us the specifics, Lord Jesus, that will tell a story of your work.

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