

# Centered Summer

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[0:00] If you would open up your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start to summer.

Rejoicing. It's about time. Summer in southeastern Wisconsin is full of unprecedented opportunities. Just think about what's going to happen down at the lake this summer. There's the 4th of July festivities, food folks and spokes right here in the square. We've got tall ships coming in early August.

I'm really looking forward to that. But you know what I'm looking forward to most? The bright sunshine on my face. And listening to the cicadas croon one another.

That's what I'm looking forward to. Well, as fellow followers of Jesus living in southeastern Wisconsin, this summer affords us an unprecedented gospel opportunity.

[1:04] Okay, six to nine months of the year, we are all cooped up in our homes, running around in our cars, rarely seeing anybody else because in Wisconsin, we're all holed up in our homes during the cold months.

But now it's time to get out and mix it up and mix it up for Jesus. So this morning, I just want to let you know up front, I am going to motivate you to step out of your comfort zones this summer in order to move towards others with the gospel of Jesus, Jesus Christ.

A couple months ago, the elders were talking about, hey, how do we help the church see and take advantage of the gospel opportunities that this summer has? And so this morning, we're going to take a break out of our series in the book of Revelation so that we can focus on 1 Corinthians 15, which is all about the gospel.

And so this morning, from 1 Corinthians 15, 1 through 11, I'm going to motivate you to step out of your comfort zone in order to tell others about Jesus this summer.

And I'm going to do it in three ways. First, I'm going to remind you of the content of the gospel. That's 1 Corinthians 15, 1 through 4. And then I'm going to impress upon you the power of the gospel, which is going to come later on in 1 Corinthians 15.

[2:27] You're going to see that in 8 through 11. And then I've saved a significant amount of time at the end of the sermon to point you to five practical steps to move out of your comfort zone towards others this summer.

So, what I want you to see is that the gospel of Jesus Christ motivates the gospel of Jesus Christ. When you understand what God and Christ has done for you, you're going to want to tell other people about it.

So let's first look at the content of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. Chapter 15, 1, let's go 15, 1 through 8. Let me give you a little background of what's going on in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul is writing to a church in the first century in the city of Corinth. This group of Christians, they were immature and they were unhealthy.

And Paul addresses issue after issue throughout this letter to this church to address issues that were of dissension and disunity.

[3:35] In fact, by the end of 1 Corinthians, he turns his attention to a small group of people in the church who believed that there was no resurrection from the dead.

And so he's going to address that issue and correct that issue in 1 Corinthians 15 by first explaining what the gospel is. And then he addresses it.

And so if you look at 1 Corinthians 15, 1 and 2, he says, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and which you stand and by which you are being

saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain.  
And so he's like, I'm going to tell you what the gospel is. Let's get on all the same page. Now when you hear that word gospel, here's what you need to understand about it.  
Originally, it was not a religious word. Remember back in the day, first century, they had no TVs. They had no radios.

[4:36] The internet wasn't discovered yet. There were no smartphones. And so when something good happened, there would be a herald, an announcer, that would go from town to town heralding the good news of something that has happened.

And so in its most general basic sense, gospel is the announcement of good news. And it could be anything. So do you remember when the Cubs won the World Series a couple years ago?

It was gospel. Cubs win. They're victorious. It was gospel to Cubs fans everywhere.

Made believers out of many. Or maybe you've seen pictures, old black and white photos of 1945 and people holding up newspapers that says, it's VE Day.

It's gospel. It's the announcement of good news. Victory in Europe. May 7th, Germany surrenders. Allies win in Europe.

[5:44] It's great rejoicing. And so that newspaper headline was gospel announcing. It's, this is what's happened. And so we see, even in our day, the gospel of economics.

Every quarter, the Fed will either offer good news or not good news. There are gospel of medicine. A cure has been discovered. That's good news.

Something has happened. So gospel simply means the announcement of good news. Something good has happened that you need to know about.

Now, when it comes to 1 Corinthians 15 and the Christian gospel, it's all about Jesus Christ and what he has done.

It's the good news of what Jesus Christ has accomplished. So, so good that everyone needs to know about it. And the good news of Jesus Christ, the Christian gospel, is not about athletics.

[6:50] It's not about politics, economics, or medicine. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that sinners who were separated from God because of their sin have been reconciled.

God has made a way through Christ to reunite them with God. And so it's this gospel that Paul spells out in 1 Corinthians 15, 3-4.

We see the content of the gospel. What is to be proclaimed? What gets announced when we proclaim the gospel to other people?

And we all need to be on the same page on it because simply saying, Hey, God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. That's not the gospel. It's saying true things, but it's not the gospel.

So in 1 Corinthians 15, 3-4, Paul points us to the content of the gospel. What Jesus has done to reconcile sinners to God.

[7:53] And I want to show you to see three all-important truths in verses 3 and 4 of the Christian gospel. You see it, first of all, in this. The gospel is all about Jesus.

Verse 3, For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that He, Christ, was buried, that He, Christ, was raised on the third day in accordance to the scriptures.

What you see in the Christian gospel is a message of good news that is centered on the person of Jesus Christ. And did you notice in verse 3 that Paul calls Jesus Christ?

It's not His last name. It's a title. It means Messiah, anointed one. The Old Testament, from very early on, spoke repeatedly, anticipating one sent from God, a Messiah king, who would come and deliver God's people and establish a kingdom on earth.

This long-awaited Messiah was God's hero to deliver His people. And what you see in the book of Acts is that Paul goes from city to city, from synagogue, Jewish synagogue after Jewish synagogue, and he is arguing to those Jews that will listen that Jesus of Nazareth is the hero, the Christ.

[9:25] It's all about Jesus. The Christian gospel is all about Jesus, but it's not just about who Jesus is.

It is that, but it's more. And so the second all-important truth you need to see is that the Christian gospel is all about what Jesus has done.

Past tense. Finished. You see that in the past tense verbs in verses 3 and 4. For I deliver to you as first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He, Christ, was buried past tense, and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, past tense.

These are all things that have happened. Done. Done. Historic. Facts. Objective realities. That every Christian can point to and say, it really happened.

The Christ was crucified, dead, buried, raised. Here's the significance. He died for our sins. What this raises is humanity's greatest problem.

[10:44] Our greatest problem is that sin, our sin, has separated us from the living God. And so we are under His judgment. And so when Jesus, we learn in 1 Corinthians 15, 3, that He died for our sin, that the Christ died for our sins, our hero, who was sinless, died as a substitute in our place for our sins.

That is how God saves people. He died for us. In Mark 10, 45, Jesus says, I came not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom payment for many.

The sinless Son of God hung on a cross and died for the sins of all those who would believe in Him. He's the perfect mediator between God and man.

He died for our sins, but that's just one aspect of the gospel. He was also buried. In fulfillment of Isaiah 53, 9, He was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

If after Jesus was crucified, you rolled out your EKG machine and you hicked it up to Jesus' body in the tomb, it would be flatline. Dead.

[12:05] The point of Paul saying he was buried points back to Isaiah 53, 9 and also communicates, hey, there was no life in his body whatsoever.

He died for our sins. He was buried. And then third, this historic fact, he was raised on the third day. It's an extraordinary claim. If you've grown up in the church, the teaching that Jesus was raised from the dead, it can kind of be like wallpaper on the church building.

It's kind of like, okay, I'm used to that, familiar with that. But when you start realizing what the actual claim is, the gospel that we proclaim is that the Christ, the long-awaited hero, he, the sinless one, died for sinners, was buried to fulfill a prophecy, and then was raised to fulfill a prophecy, and raised from the dead, you're proclaiming a miracle.

You're declaring something supernatural. Because we all know that dead people typically don't rise from the dead, especially those who say, I'm going to raise from the dead three days after I die, and then do it.

[13:29] So on Friday, Jesus died for sin, payment made, and on Sunday, Jesus was raised from the dead, which communicates that that payment of sin was fully accepted by God, and this Savior is fully vindicated.

Victorious over sin, death, and the devil. It's all about Jesus, this gospel, and it's all about what Jesus has done.

So the picture is of us showing up and declaring to people, did you know that the long-awaited hero, he died for sin, buried, and he's alive today.

He was raised three days later. That's the gospel. And then do you know what Paul does in verses five through eight? In this text, Paul does something really interesting.

Here, let me just read it for you. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, verse four, verse five, and that he appeared to Cephas, that's another name for Peter, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep, then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, last of all, as to one untimely board, he appeared to me.

[14:45] Do you see what he does? Paul says, oh, this is a historic reality. In fact, let me roll out 500 witnesses for you that you can actually talk to.

If Paul had a smartphone, he'd be like, hey, do you want to talk to, you know, Cephas or James or one of those 500? Hey, I can share the contact with you. You can reach out to them because in verse six, most of them are still alive anyway.

You can hear from them yourself how they saw Jesus after he was raised from the dead. It's eyewitness accounts. The point is this.

It's a historic event. We don't proclaim wishful thinking. We proclaim objective realities.

The gospel is something that Christ has done. And in verse eight, Paul says, last of all, as once and timely born, he appeared also to me.

[15:41] Do you see what he's saying? I'm writing you this and I myself have seen Jesus after he was raised from the dead.

I am an eyewitness. And you know what? You can read of that eyewitness account in Acts chapter nine when Paul has this very interesting encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. These historical facts about Jesus, his death, burial, and resurrection, this is what's accomplished our salvation. This is what reconciles sinners to God.

It's the heart of the gospel. So we've seen that it's all about Jesus and it's all about what Jesus has past tense done.

We proclaim something that's happened. And then third, I want you to see this all important truth is that it's all according to God's plan for the fullness of time.

[16:47] Did you notice in verses three and four that Jesus, that Christ died in accordance with the scriptures? That on the third day he was raised in accordance with the scriptures? Christ's death, burial, and resurrection?

These are not random events. These are actually the purposed fulfillments of God's plan, fulfilling a passage like Isaiah 53, 3-12, where the Messiah dies on behalf of others.

He's buried in a rich man's tomb, and then he's vindicated resurrection. But here's what you need to see. If this is according to the scriptures, that means it's according to a plan.

God had this plan set out from before the foundation of the world. And so in order for Jesus to fulfill something written 700 plus years before he walked the earth in Isaiah, that means that there was something else going on to orchestrate it all.

That God had a sovereign plan that he is carrying out to rescue sinners. What the Old Testament anticipated, Jesus Christ accomplished. And so this, according to the scriptures, reveals a plan for the fullness of time.

[18:03] And when there's a plan, there's intentionality. And when there's intentionality, there's a motive. Do you know what the motive is of this plan? For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God loves this world, the sinners of this world, and he wants to reconcile them to himself, which gets at the goal of this plan.

The goal of this plan is not your self-esteem. The goal of this plan is for you to be reconciled to God. Hear the word of God. 1 Peter 3.18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

The goal of the gospel is God to reconcile us to God so that we can see him for who he is and give him the praise and glory due his name, that we could live lives that actually please him.

[19:29] This morning, I just want to remind you of the content of the gospel. It's all about Jesus. He's the Christ. It's all about what he has done, died, buried, raised, and it's all about God's plan for the fullness of time.

The goal is to reconcile sinners to God. You know, you all know this already because you're probably all Packers fans with the exception of a couple of you who are Bears fans, maybe one of you who's a Seahawks fan.

Vince Lombardi, at the beginning of every season, would gather his Packers football club together and he would hold up a football and say to those men, this is a football. Start with the basics.

What he's saying is, this game has everything to do with the movement of this ball. And this morning, at the outset of the summer of 2019, I am holding up the gospel to you.

Christ died, buried, raised. It's all about the movement of this gospel and how you can maximize it this summer. I have in my notes here to correct a common misunderstanding.

[20:44] I'm not going to expand on it for the sake of time, but I can tell you what it is. There are a bunch of people out there who say things like

this. They think that they're quoting Francis of Assisi.

They say, proclaim the gospel and if you have to, use words. It couldn't be further from the truth. First of all, Francis of Assisi never said it. And second, we don't proclaim the gospel with our actions.

Our actions will either verify or deny the gospel, but we proclaim the gospel with our mouths.

Nobody's going to become a Christian by watching your life.

But people will become Christians when they see your life, verifies the gospel, and they say, hey, how can I be saved? How can I live for God like that?

And you're able to tell them the good news of what Christ has done for them in order to reconcile them to God. Okay.

[21:49] We've got to be square on the content of the gospel. And this summer is going to be an unprecedented opportunity to proclaim it. We've got to be clear on the content, but now I want to impress upon you the power of the gospel.

In my desire right now, when we look at this, I want you to sense something. I want you to sense that this message of the gospel is God's power.

that the gospel alone can do something that nothing else can. There's nothing else on the planet or in the universe that is able to reconcile a sinner to a holy God.

So let me impress upon you the power of the gospel. In chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians 3-8, Paul kind of walks through the content of the gospel, and then in verse 8-11, he turns, he pivots.

And the gospel gets extremely personal. Did you notice the shift in language to first person plural, first person singular? Here's what I mean.

[23:00] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles and worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and you believe.

It gets personal. Paul knew something about the power of this message firsthand. First hand. earlier in the book of 1 Corinthians, if you want to flip back to 1 Corinthians 1, verse 18, Paul talks about the gospel in the most interesting of ways.

He says, for the word of the cross, verse 18, the word of the cross, another way of talking about the gospel, is folly to those who are perishing. It's stupid to people who don't have a heart to believe it. But to us who are being saved, who actually believe the gospel, it is the power of God. God's power explodes through the message of the gospel.

[24:23] Do you remember Romans 1, 16? Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel. the objective reality of who Christ is and what he's done. Died, buried, raised.

This gospel is God's power unto salvation for all who believe. So here's what I want to put before you. The gospel is not just a set of historic objective realities about who Jesus is and what he's done.

It is that, but it's not just that. The gospel, this message about who Jesus is and what he's done, it is God's power to save.

It's God's power to save, transform, and enable. In this passage, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul doesn't use the word power.

He uses another word. It's used, repeated three times. You probably saw it. Look at verse 10. But by the grace of God, I am what I am.

[25:37] And his grace toward me was not in vain. But the grace of God that is with me, grace, grace, grace, grace. Paul, throughout his writings, will use God's power and God's grace virtually synonymously.

And what God's grace emphasizes is God's loving motive in the exercise of his power. Think about it this way. Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God graciously exercises his power for the good of sinners.

That's his grace. God's riches at Christ's expense. grace. It's a power. It gets stuff done. It saves. For by grace, you've been saved through faith.

This gospel grace, this power, reconciles sinners to God so that a sinner, upon believing the gospel, has a whole new relationship with the living God.

The sin that had separated them because of Christ's death, it removed the obstacle so that a sinner can now be in a new relationship with the living God without fear.

[26:54] He goes from being a rebel to a son or a daughter. Nothing else can do that. Brothers and sisters, there's nothing else that can do that but the gospel.

Someone who believes the gospel, that God and Christ has done this for them, they believe that, their sins are forgiven, their eternity is changed, they're transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son.

They are no longer indwelt and controlled only by their sinful nature but the spirit of God has come to live within them. They are a walking temple of the Holy Spirit. Instead of being hostile to God and being at enmity with them because of Christ's blood and his resurrection, we have peace now with God.

God the gospel does that. There's nothing else. There's nothing else. The 100,000 people of Kenosha, there's nothing else they can hear or believe that will reconcile them to God.

But it just doesn't save. This gospel grace, this power of God, it transforms. It gives you a new relationship and a new identity.

[28:10] And you see it right here in the text. Paul says in verse 9, For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am. By the grace of God I am what I am. He was a persecutor and destroyer of God's church and then he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, the risen Christ and all of a sudden he's no longer a persecutor and destroyer.

He's an apostle too and builder of God's church. Do you see the transformation? Given a whole new identity.

When someone believes the gospel and they're reconciled to God, they have a new relationship, they have a new identity, they're no longer sinners, they're saints, they're no longer rebels, they're children.

They're no longer enslaved, they're free. Free to do what? To live out your new identity in new activity.

[29:23] We see it in the text. The new activity for Paul upon his conversion and his transformation, new identity, he is now no longer crushing the church, he's building the church in his apostolic ministry.

God's grace working within Paul enabled him, enabled him to work hard at preaching and planting churches. You see that? In verse 10, on the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me, within me.

Flip back to Colossians chapter 1, verses 28 and 29. Paul uses similar language describing his toil for building the church.

He says, in verse 28, him we proclaim, Jesus the Christ we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ for this I toil, presenting everyone mature in Christ, this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me, his gracious power.

You see, the gospel grace that is poured out enables gospel ministry. As Christians, you have a new relationship with God.

[30:44] You have a new identity in Christ, and now you've been given new activity to be a part of. In addition to new ways we go about our marriages and our parenting and our singleness and our occupations and our leisure time, we have been given a whole new gospel activity as well, fulfilling the great commission.

Jesus commissioned us to this. He said, go make disciples of the nations, and the way we do that is by going and proclaiming the gospel to all who will hear. Let me just throw this by you.

Sharing the gospel with people isn't just one nice thing we do for people. It is the greatest, most loving thing we can do for people because it's this message in which God unleashes his power to reconcile sinners to himself.

The goal is God, and it's the most loving thing we can do for people to say, here's how you can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Here's how God takes care of your sin.

Here's what he has done. He's been raised from the dead in order to demonstrate it's all true. We get to proclaim God's power to people in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[32:09] God's gracious power supplies what we need to proclaim the gospel. gospel grace, it is able to move us out of our comfort zones and move us to people in order to make known to them what Christ has done and what only Christ can do.

this power saves, this power transforms, this power enables whole new activities, new relationship, new identity, new activity.

I know what can give you pause in sharing the gospel with other people because I experience it too. Let me ask you, is there someone in your life right now that when you think about sharing the gospel with them, you're like, there's no way?

There's no way. Man, I could be like crystal clear gospel presentation and there's just no way that they would respond. And what you're saying in the back of your mind is, oh, they wouldn't respond because they're too successful.

Oh, they wouldn't respond because they're too intelligent. Oh, they wouldn't respond because they're too entrenched in their sinful lifestyle. There's just no way that they would respond. It's too hard for the gospel.

[33:22] And what we're really saying is, God's power is insufficient to radically change this person. If the gospel is able to transform a destroyer of the church into a builder of the church, it can transform anybody.

If the gospel was able to change me, it can change anybody. If the gospel is able to change you, it can change anybody. The gospel is not insufficient for the task.

And that's where I want to move your trust. To trust in God's power made known through this message. The last few days, I've been so encouraged by this verse, 2 Corinthians 5.20.

We read this. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making His appeal through us. Did you hear that? God making His appeal through us?

When we move towards people and share the gospel with them, God is making His powerful appeal through us. How's that for perspective?

[34:40] God's power is unrivaled. It alone reconciles sinners to the living God.

Okay, we've looked at the content of the gospel. We've dwelt on the power of the gospel. And now, I want to point you to five practical steps you can take this summer to move out of your comfort zone and to move towards others for Christ.

You ready? Number one. The first thing to do is to get clear on what the gospel is and what the gospel is not. And to that end, I'd like to recommend this book for you by Greg Gilbert, produced by Nine Marks.

And what this book does is it provides a very helpful outline for you to understand what the gospel is so that you can communicate it faithfully. It's very simple.

God, man, Jesus, respond. It's very helpful. I use it in my own personal evangelism to keep me on task. And wouldn't you know, look it, I have ten copies up here ready to give away like pancakes.

[35:54] So, after the service first ten up here, I will gladly give it to you. One per family. I would just ask that you exercise the golden rule when you come down for them.

So the first one is get clear on what the gospel is and what it's not and this will help you do that. It'll motivate you to move out of your comfort zone towards others. The second thing, and if there's one thing I would want you to walk away with, an immediate step you can do tomorrow morning, it's this. Be grateful. Be grateful for what God through Christ has done for you. Return to me, God, the joy of salvation.

Let me show you how to do it. Would you open up your Bible to Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 through 10. Here's what you can do tomorrow morning in order to, by faith, cultivate gratitude in your heart for what God has done for you through Christ.

And what it is is you take Ephesians 2, 1 through 10 and you make it personal. I'm going to show you how to do it. You ready? You can do this as a prayer tomorrow morning.

[37:15] Chapter 2, verse 1 through 10. You're swapping out pronouns. And I was dead in the trespasses and sin in which I once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience among whom I once lived in the passions of my flesh, carrying out the desires of my body and my mind and I was by nature a child of wrath like the rest of mankind.

That was me. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved me, even when I was dead in my trespasses, made me alive together with Christ.

By grace I have been saved and raised me up with him and seated me with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards me in Christ Jesus.

For by grace I have been saved through faith. This is not my doing, it's the gift of God, not a result of my works so that I'm not going to boast for I am his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that I should walk in them.

You see how that works? Do you see how that can cultivate gospel gratitude in your heart tomorrow morning? Here's what's going to happen. When you walk through a passage and apply it to yourself like that, personal gratitude for the gospel starts bubbling up and that personal gratitude for the gospel fuels personal proclamation of the gospel.

[39:10] gospel. This is the 94 ophanth of motivation for the Christian. Gratitude, joy for what God has done.

It is a really powerful motivator. So when you realize of what God has done for you in Christ and you have this growing gratitude for his gracious power on your behalf through Christ, you know what you're going to want to do, who can I tell?

Who can I tell? My brother needs to hear, my sister needs to hear this. My neighbor needs to hear this.

If you walk away with just one thing, walk away with that this morning. the third step, tell your story as a story. Tell your story as a story.

And this book by Sam Chan, it's called Evangelism in a Skeptical World. Matt Sear, Billy Nye, and I have been working slowly through this book. In chapter two, it's titled Everyday Evangelism.

[40:22] And in chapter two, Sam Chan spells out six strategies for everyday evangelism. And the sixth strategy is to tell our story as story.

And what he so skillfully does is he helps Christians prepare a unique explanation for how God's grace intersected their life and changed them in story form.

And so here's what I've done. I've had Mary produce 30 copies just of this strategy. They're on both tables as your lead, 15 and 15, 14 and 15.

But pick one up as you're going along. And here's what you can do with this. It's going to take some effort. It'll take 10 to 30 minutes to get something together, maybe more than that.

But you're going to find yourself having a very effective gospel tool. A very effective gospel tool that can be used in our life groups. Life group leaders. I'm going to bring our life group through this in the fall.

[41:29] I want everybody in our life group being able to say, explain their unique story and how the gospel, objective gospel, changed them. And then you share it with each other in your life group.

Our life groups are our small groups. They're a central part of our life together. And then, here's the other way you can use something like this. If you put this together and you're like, man, I want to use this, come talk to me.

Here's why. We're looking to introduce more and more gospel testimonies during our Sunday morning service. We want more and more people hearing what God, by His grace, has done in the lives of the people in this room.

And so, if you put this together and you're like, yeah, I want to give that a shot on a Sunday morning, come talk to me. Finally, when you have a personal testimony, it's a very effective and personal evangelism.

When I share my faith, when I share the gospel, I introduce it in two ways. I either ask a very straightforward, have you ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ before? You'd be amazed at how many people say, no, I've never heard it.

[42:38] And then I say, can I explain it to you? And you're like, sure. And then I go, God, man, Jesus, respond. But there's another way to communicate the gospel that Sam Chan really helps us with.

It's when you approach someone and you say, can I tell you how I became a Christian? It's a very effective evangelistic tool. Let me encourage you to pick this up because this is just one step this summer you can take to move outside of your comfort zones and towards other people.

The fourth step is what Matt was talking about during the announcements, The Art of Neighboring. It's this book. It's a six-week course that provides clear and very practical steps to move towards those people living immediately around you.

And over the course of the year, Jenny and I have put these principles into practice. and we've been so encouraged how we've gotten to know our neighbors, how it's opened doors.

This is an evangelistic long-term strategy with the people that you're living around. We're going to have, offer these throughout the summer, Tuesday night, Thursday night.

[43:54] Jenny and I are hosting the Tuesday night group. Matt and Elise here are hosting the Thursday night group. And I would just encourage you to participate in this because the genius of it is having loving accountability to do it together.

You will not regret it. Six, just six, six sessions. The last step you see in your bulletin.

Summer picnics in the park. Summer outreaches. We're seeing these outreaches as opportunities to connect people with a gospel-driven church.

This church is a gospel resource. Christ in us. So here's how you can use the summer outreaches. First way is this. If you're aware of Christians who are on the outskirts of our church, we want to weave them into the fabric of our life together.

[45:04] And so the way that you do that is you risk a little bit, you approach them, and you say, hey, we got a July 9th picnic in the park. Do you want to come with us? And when they come with you, you introduce them to people from our church.

You're like, oh, you like cycling. Oh, you need to meet Matt Sear who's another avid cyclist. Oh, you like smoking pipes. Oh, you need to talk to Garrett Goldberg about pipes. Now, if you're new to Christ the King Church and you don't know anybody, you know what you should do?

Just approach anybody and say, hey, can we come with you? You're not overstepping your bounds. But brothers and sisters of Christ the King, let's move towards others to get them in.

Now, the second group of people, there are non-Christians outside of the faith that we're all interacting with on a weekly basis. Let's invite them to come to one of these picnics, one of these outreaches.

And here's why. We want to introduce non-Christians to genuine followers of Jesus Christ because we want our non-Christian friends to be saying things like this.

[46:20] Oh, whoa. Wait, there are other rational human beings besides you that have decided to follow Jesus. It forms what Chan calls a plausibility structure.

we want to bring people to these picnics to step out in faith, to move towards others outside of our comfort zones and to say, come, come meet these people who have been changed by the gospel. Imagine that you bring someone there and one of your church friends shares their story of how the risen Christ graciously interrupted their life.

Now, that's what I'm talking about. Okay, I've reminded you of the content of the gospel. I've sought to impress upon you the power of the gospel and now I've pointed you to five practical steps to move you outside of your comfort zone towards others.

Now, imagine this. A bunch of us from Christ the King Church, imagine what would happen, what will God do if we step out in full confidence in the power of the gospel to change anybody, anybody, to save them and transform them and enable them to live new lives.

[47:39] Imagine what God can do if we just step out confident that God's, that the gospel is able to do what it says it's able to do.

Do you know what I think is going to happen? It may not be hundreds of people coming, becoming Christians, but I think it's going to be a steady stream. God making his appeal through us and people responding in repentance and faith, being reconciled to God.

I don't know about you, but I can't think of anything more worthy than the summer of 2019.

let's pray. God in heaven, we are so grateful that you would send the Christ to die for us, to be buried and to be raised from the dead.

that you are alive now, Lord Jesus. And so now we ask that you would pour out your spirit upon us and embolden our witness in this city, that you would make your appeal through us and that many would respond in repentance and faith this summer and come September, that there would be singing, people singing who are not singing to you right now.

[49:04] Worthy are you of our every breath. Worthy is the Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.