

# Be A Light In A Dark World

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[0:00] I'm going to take the liberty of telling just a brief story. I love that one sometimes.

I remember when we were searching for Pastor Ken. And in God's providence, it just worked out that Judith and I were in the neighborhood of the church that he was ministering at.

And so we dropped in on his, was it July the 4th part? It was the graduation part. Graduation part, yeah. And, you know, we had gone through the courtship process, asked all kinds of questions, and we were pretty interested.

And so I showed up there, and it was a party, and they were at a park somewhere. And the thing that really struck me was that here we were, we were having this meaningful conversation about his future potential employment.

And there were a couple kids that needed his help. And he excused himself from his interview to go over and take care of those kids.

[1:35] That's when I thought it was a good idea to have him come. And he hasn't disappointed us. So, Pastor, preach your heart out.

Oh. No, don't take this. Now, that wasn't bad. I thought you were going to say what I said. All right. Well, if you want to know the rest of the story, you're going to have to ask him since I'm...

Well, it is a privilege for me to be able to be here with you tonight and just to be able to celebrate and to be a part of this mission conference.

It's been a long time since I've sang like that, too, so I'm actually feeling it now in my throat a little bit. Is this my water, by the way? I saw this water here. That's all right.

Because I was like, man, I haven't sung like that in a while. So that was really good. But I'm really glad to be with you guys here tonight.

[2:30] And I've been praying about what I should speak about and what I should share with you tonight. And I've been thinking about the theme, you know, being a light in a dark world.

And just continually going over how I could share that and what I wanted to share in relationship to that. And I kept coming back to one passage of Scripture that I want to share with you this evening. My difficulty, though, in sharing this with you tonight is the fact that I had the privilege of serving here as youth pastor for 11 years.

And so you guys know me. You know my weaknesses. You know my strengths. I know your weaknesses. For the most part, a lot of you, I know your strengths.

And really, my message tonight, I feel I'm preaching to your strength. So I really struggled with, should I even preach this message? But the more that I prayed about it, the more I just felt this is what God wanted me to share.

[3:36] So I just want to put that out there at the beginning. I'm going to share something with you tonight that I believe, at least from what I have seen when I was here, and even from a distance the last eight years, is one of your strengths.

Now, before I do that, I want to also say that Eileen and I and the girls who are here with us, you probably don't recognize them. The girls are a little bit older.

Emily is a senior in high school. So those of you who remember when she was born, yes, she's a senior in high school. Elise is a sophomore.

And the boys are out of the house. So I don't even know. Actually, I think they're both at Summit University, Clark Summit University right now.

Kevin went out there for the weekend. Hey, Rose, I didn't expect to see you here. How are you? So I want to first of all say thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness to us, for your partnership, and allowing us to be able to serve for eight years as a lot of missionaries.



And one of the things that it talked about was the 1.8 billion children in the world. And I think about, you know, I used to, where I served in Virginia, and as that number expands, there's 6.3 million children in the four states that we work with.

And we're reaching around 100,000 of them. And sometimes I start to get overwhelmed by the sheer volume of unbelievers that there are.

[11:04] We come to our churches. We feel comfortable. We have our spots in our pews that we want to sit.

Thank you for letting me sit in my spot tonight. I appreciate that. I'm sure Sunday morning somebody will be disappointed if I'm in that spot because that spot's probably been taken by somebody else. But we all have our spots that we come to.

And we go to our jobs and we do our work. But the number of unbelievers around us is just growing and growing and growing.

But yet so many of us as believers become more and more content where we are. And we're satisfied.

And we're concerned about things like, they didn't play my song today. I didn't like what pastor preached on today.

[12:04] Whatever. Whatever. My kid didn't do good enough in their sports this week. Rather than this person here that I came into contact with.

They need Jesus. It's the bottom line. Some of you might get our newsletter or might see our letter that we send to the church here.

And we've signed it the same way, I think, for the last six years. God's glory. What's the second part? Lost mankind.

It's what it's all about, right? And so what are we doing to reach that 1.8 billion, or not, sorry, that's me in my area, 1.8 billion children around the world?

And so when we really start to think about that, how are we going to reach them? Because the task is great.

[13:09] The task is huge. The task is not something that I can do. And when I look to God's word, and when I look in, sorry, I actually went to the passage I'm going to go to later, and now I've got to go back there.

When I look in 1 Thessalonians 2, I want to read verses 5 through 12 tonight. And Paul says this, For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed.

God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day. That we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

[14:27] You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you, and encouraged each, and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

And so the first thing, when I look into this passage, and when I start to say, how does this, what did Paul do when it really came to sharing the gospel?

What was really at one of the core principles of why he was effective in sharing the gospel? What was it that he did that he longed for?

And I really think that if you study, and as you look at this passage, and you look at verse eight, in verse eight, Paul says this, he says, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves.

See, a lot of us are willing to go and do something. You know, some of you might be willing to drop a track at dinner. You might be willing to go out and knock on somebody's door.

[15:48] You might be willing to talk to somebody. But see, here Paul shared, it wasn't just that he wanted to share with you the gospel. It was, I'm gonna share myself with you.

It wasn't just about the truth of the gospel. Yes, this is, that's greatly important, and I don't wanna neglect that, and so we're gonna, we're gonna come back around to that.

But it was about this relationship that he had. See, God didn't give us, God didn't intend for us in our relationships to be alone, right?

What did he say about Adam? Remember, I'm a response, I like feedback, so you guys gotta help me here. Okay? What did God say about Adam? It's not good for him to be alone, so what did he do?

Made Eve, right? What do we also see later on, and I can't think of the book, where it says, a man who finds a wife finds a good thing, right?

[16:55] Why? Because God didn't intend for us to be alone, did he? Even as we go through, and we see the importance, we have in 1 Corinthians 12, we see a picture of the body, whether, no matter what your gifts are, no matter how great you might think you are, or how lowly you might think you are, guess what?

In the body of Christ, you are needed, and there is a part that we all have, and we have to work together to accomplish what God wants us to do in his church.

Relationships are of vital importance. We have to have them, and as I was thinking about this, and why, again, when it came back to me thinking about this passage, and preaching tonight about the topic of relationships and sharing the gospel, I remind, it just kept flooding my mind.

Pastor Knoyer, why was it that we went to doing small groups? Was it, and I shared this with Pastor Andrew, is that today?

It was. That was earlier today we were talking. It wasn't that preaching on Sunday night was a bad thing, right? Is somebody in here gonna say preaching on Sunday night was a bad thing?

[18:14] I don't think so. But small groups was a better thing. And it helped the body to grow. Why? Because of relationships.

Relationship with what? Does anybody remember what Pastor Andrew said? See, I always remember these things, Pastor preach. Pastor's like, wow, I didn't know that. Because Alistair Begg always used to say, right? Never underestimate the ability of God's people to forget what you just said.

Relationships with teeth. Not just accountability, but with some teeth. Something that's really gonna help us to grow. Several years ago, there was a book, some of you that are youth leaders might remember, we actually gave out this book to some of our youth leaders called Hurt.

And it talked about youth culture and how it used to be that you needed to have mom and dad were really around and so kids really succeeded. But in today's culture, that they need at least five adults investing in every one young person's life in order to help them succeed in life.

They needed more. It used to be mom and dad, grandma and grandpa lived here, but that wasn't the way culture was. It wasn't the way our society was anymore. So kids needed five adults. We actually put a tree out on the bulletin board that has now been demolished and replaced and it's no longer there.

[19:36] But there was this big tree and we had all these students' names on it. And we asked people to take their names and to pray for them and to care for them and to love on them.

Why? Because relationships are of vital importance to help us to grow in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to have these relationships. If we don't have these relationships, we're ultimately going to be left alone.

And when we're left alone and we find ourselves in isolation, it's so easy to walk out the door and to walk away from the church. And when we walk away from the church, we become lunch for the lion. And so we have to make sure that those relationships keep us connected. And so Paul in this passage says he didn't just want to share the gospel.

It was more than just that. It was more than just the point of sharing the gospel, but he was affectionately desirous of you and he wanted to share his life.

[20:42] But you know what? We also have to make sure that there is biblical engagement. I oftentimes think of my boys.

Some of you know that some of my, I mentioned earlier, you know my weaknesses and my strengths, right? So one of my weaknesses, some people would say, is that I like to play strategy games.

Okay? And my boys have actually gotten to be pretty good at these games also. Although I don't normally let them beat me, I still win.

But they're getting better at them. Tom, I think you can relate to this, right? Okay. Tom always wins. No, I don't think that's true anymore. Yes.

Tom's like, no, not anymore. But if the things that I teach my children are, you know what? I also love sports.

[21:40] And so I teach them to love sports. And I teach them to be good at strategy games. And I teach them how to drive. And I teach them how to be wise stewards of their finances.

The world might look at them and say, that is a successful young man. But I as a parent, I as a father, failed.

Because it isn't just about the relationship. The relationship is important. And we have to make sure that we are being intentionally focused when it comes to that relationship.

But we also have to make sure that we balance it with scriptural truth. I want you to turn over in your Bible to Deuteronomy chapter 32. Deuteronomy chapter 32.

We'll do a little review here. Who can tell me what's happening? Some of you are like, I don't know, I never looked at Deuteronomy chapter 32. Deuteronomy chapter 32. What's going on?

[22:57] What's going on? Yes, pastor bailed you out. Okay? Moses is preaching his final message. Why?

What's about to happen? The children of Israel are about to go into the promised land. And where's Moses going to go? He's going to die. He does not get to go into the promised land.

And Moses knows this. And so Moses is speaking to the children of Israel for his very last time. And he gets down to verse 44.

And this is where I want to start reading here. Deuteronomy chapter 32 starting verse 44 says, Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people.

He and Joshua, the son of Nun. And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today that you may command them to your children that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.

[24:10] For it is no empty word for you, but your very life. And by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess it.

You know what? I know there's a lot of you in here who have lost loved ones. And you know what happens when somebody is on their deathbed and they know that they're getting ready to pass into eternity?

What do they want to do? They want to get their family together. Right? They want to see maybe a sibling or those kind of things.

I remember when my mom was sick and she knew that she was coming to the end of her days. She wanted different family relatives to come in and she wanted to just see them one more time.

And she wanted to share with them one more time. Just one thing. Like for my uncle it was something for my aunt for my grandpa for everybody. There was something different that she wanted to make sure that they knew and that they remembered.

[25:17] Because see when we come to the end of our life it's like we know that we want to make sure that we have that opportunity to say what's most important. All these other things don't matter anymore. This is what you have to know.

And that's what Moses is doing here. And so Moses goes through and he reminds the people of Israel the children of Israel all the things that God had done for them all the things how God had provided for them the lessons that he brought them through all of the different things and he says to the people of Israel he says take to heart all the words that I'm warning to you this day then down in verse 47 it is no empty word for you but it is your very life.

In other words everything else this is the most important thing that you can do is to make sure that your children know and understand the word of God and that's why I said earlier if the only thing I teach my boys is all these different things about knowing how to drive and being good with finances and loving sports and being good at strategy games if those are the things that I've taught my sons then I've failed because they have to know the truths of God's words.

but on the other side of it is if the only thing I ever tell them is this but there's no relationship to go along with it I lose that opportunity to speak into their lives because see the reason why relationships are so powerful is because it allows us the opportunity to speak into somebody else's life I have always said and I know some in here will disagree with me but I have always said that I am not a very good teacher but I'm really good at relationships and because I'm good at

relationships people will want to hear what I have to say and they'll listen to it a lot of the young people that have been a part of our youth group they'll probably tell you yeah he wasn't really all that good but the relationship that went along with it that's what made the difference you know we serve with Awana now and we've gone through some changes and tomorrow night we're going to talk about things that have gone on for us personally and this last year

Awana has made some changes with their books and a lot of people have struggled with the philosophical change that Awana has made because Awana has no longer become performance driven it has become relationship driven it's no longer about how many kids can we have finish their books but how many kids can we make sure know and understand each of the verses that they learn each and every week and that becomes a challenge because now it's not just about I come to Awana and I listen to a kid say a verse but it's a kid comes to Awana and I sit down with them and I explain what that verse means to them and how it applies to their lives whoa there's a lot of leaders that aren't ready for that they're not ready to step into that space to have a spiritual conversation with a third or fourth or fifth or sixth grader because they're going to get asked some questions and they're like I don't know the answer to that question and I don't want to answer that question but when we get to talk to them about God's word and how it impacts their life what an awesome opportunity what an awesome blessing to be able to speak the truth of God's word into a young person's life so how many of you ever seen a you know we don't really use these much maybe Heather

[29:37] Anderson has one of these at her house just because she has some of these really neat looking artifacts I don't know what else to call them sorry Heather so how many of you like in westerns you see these right they're called barrels okay Heather's like I don't have any of those sorry okay and they're made up of these different wooden pieces that come along the sides right and then there's the metal piece that goes around it you guys got that visual in your head maybe I should have made a picture of that right so there's a barrel and it holds what what do we put inside of it water or something else like that what's the problem with that the water will only go up so how high to the top unless what one of the I forget does anybody know what those things are called stays thank you and what hoops hula hoops oh no that's different hoops I didn't know they were called hoops but stays thank you so you have these stays see pastor do you have one of those no okay so if you have these stays that go along and what happens if one of the stays breaks like toward the top you can't you no longer can fill it up to the very top right because when the water gets to that level what happens all the water starts pouring out right there if you break another one a little bit lower guess what it's no longer going to get to that height it's only going to get to this height so when we start talking about ministry especially when it comes to the 1.8 billion children in the world we have to balance relationship and God's word and if we don't balance them we're only going to be able to be as effective as the highest stay so we may be really strong when it comes to our knowledge of scripture but if we have very weak relationships this is as high as we're going to ever get if we have really strong relationships but our understanding of scripture is way down here this is as far as we're going to get in order for us to raise that bar in order for us to raise that level of ministry we have to be building both we have to have intentional relationships but we have to be highly biblical both have to be there so the question for you tonight is this not how high what's your highest stay but what's your lowest is it relationships if so then you need to figure out how to work on that so that way you have the opportunity to be able to speak in other people's lives if it's

God's word then guess what you need to make sure that you're spending time studying God's word and you need to get yourself into God's word so that way you can raise that because you have to have them both to be truly effective when it comes to our ministry and reaching out we have lots of opportunities to share the gospel they're all around us each and every day we oftentimes get so upset with things that are going on in our political culture today and I'm like you know what we got to expect unbelievers to act like unbelievers okay why should we expect unbelievers to act like believers they're not going to there are people everywhere you go you walk into the store there are unbelievers that that you may actually bump into and you can have the opportunity to share the gospel but you have to be intentional in your relationship don't just don't be wishy washy in your relationship you have to bring the meat along with it you have to have the relationship that carries some teeth with them but you also have to have the teeth that means that you need to know God's word highly relational highly biblical both have to be there if we are going to truly be a light in a dark world that's where it begins so where do you need to grow I hope that you're going to be

here tomorrow night I hope that God is going to challenge you in some ways to really figure out what it is that God wants you to do and taking that next step in following him let's pray God I thank you so much for the way that you teach us and how you use your word in our lives to draw us closer to you Lord I thank you for godly men that you have placed in my life that have been intentional with their relationships with me to help me to grow closer to you so Lord I thank you for them Lord I there's not enough that I could say Lord I pray that as we come here tonight and we're just going through our everyday lives to come to this mission conference and as we sit here tonight Lord I pray that you would press on our hearts what it is that you want us to learn and Lord that you would cause us to grow in the areas in our life that we need to grow for us to be effective servants of yours Lord you have called us as your children you've placed us on this earth to bring you glory and to reach lost mankind and Lord I pray that you would help us to be intentionally focused in our relationships that we build and that we have that we would have a strong understanding of your word that we might have a huge impact in the world around us Lord in Jesus name Amen