

Missions Conference

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[0 : 00] Howdy! Some of you are looking at me kind of funny when I turn off my voice. I'm just kidding. My name is J.T. Gorham, missionary to the deaf with Silent Word Ministries, the largest unreached people group in the world.

Now, if you notice, I've been up here standing, doing a lot of the sign language stuff. It's for a purpose, I promise you. I'd like to introduce you, my team. If you would, come on up. So this here is Pastor Rusty Van Dunkler.

He is also a missionary to the deaf with Silent Word Ministries. His wife, Miss Cassandra, and then their daughter, Rebecca. And so all three of them are deaf.

Now, interesting, there's a lot of things about the culture of the deaf, and we'll explain a little bit more about that here soon. But really, I'd like an opportunity first to have Brother Rusty share just a little bit of his testimony about his life so you can get a little glimpse of what the life of a deaf person is like.

So if you would go share a little bit of your testimony and the verse. Sorry, my voice is pretty lousy.

[1 : 20] JT has a much more beautiful voice than mine. So I grew up in Greenville, South Carolina.

My parents were both hearing, and all of my siblings were hearing, so I was the only deaf in my family. So my mom found out that I was deaf when I was about two years old.

And my older brother, he would cry and whine and complain, and I was like just the perfect little angel. I would sit there, I wasn't making any noise, any trouble at all. And then my parents started becoming just a little concerned about me, wondering, well, maybe he just can't hear.

So I went to the doctor, and they found out, oh, he's deaf. So then I started learning sign language and started going to school and just, you know, just kind of going on.

But really, my parents, my family, none of them learned any sign language at all. So I started going to church, and my family were all saved, but I knew nothing because they didn't have any kind of interpreter or anything.

[2 : 24] So I'd count the ceiling tiles. I would count the lights. I would look at people. I would try to lip read what the pastor was saying. I'd look at the cross. I had no idea what that meant. But honestly, I had no idea about who Jesus Christ was, even though I went to church every week.

It wasn't until I was 27 years old. I was up at a camp, a Christian camp there in Canada, and there was a man that used sign language there and began explaining the gospel to me.

And he said, do you know that you are a sinner? Do you know who Jesus Christ is? That was the first time I even heard who Jesus was there when I was 27 years old.

And at that point, I realized, you know, I was a sinner. And because of the things I've done wrong, I can't get into heaven. But thank God for his son, Jesus Christ, who came here to this earth to die on the cross and was raised again for us.

It doesn't matter who you are, whether you're hearing or deaf or say, if you learn Spanish or whatever your cultural or background is, Jesus Christ is the one that died for all.

- [3 : 32] And he is the savior that gave his life for all. And that was the first time that I had ever heard about Jesus Christ. And that day, I trusted him to save me. And then I went to Harvest Death Baptist Bible College there in Georgia, there in Ringgold, Georgia.
- That's where I met my wife and then raised my children, my four children there. But really, I was a high school dropout. I was one that people thought there'd be no way that God could use me.
- But thankfully, he is merciful. And even through my multitude of mistakes, God was still willing to hear me and be able to use me. And, you know, I've never been able to hear the birds sing.
- I've never been able to hear a waterfall. Here recently, when you were singing Spanish, I couldn't hear, but I was excited to be able to see that interpreted. But I can't wait till I can get to heaven and finally be able to hear the singing and glorifying for God there.
- I'm just sure I'll just weep just the thought of being able to finally get to go to heaven to be able to hear God's voice. So there, God began working on my heart, burning my heart to go reach the deaf there in my hometown of Greenville, South Carolina.
- [4 : 45] And I planted a deaf church there in Greenville so that I can continue to teach, train, disciple, mentor, and preach to the deaf there in Greenville.
- Many of them that have no idea about who Jesus Christ was and have the opportunity to see so many deaf saved there through the ministry there. So I'd like to go ahead and just briefly share about Matthew chapter 5 and verse 16.
- Matthew chapter 5 and verse 16.
- It says, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
- Let your light so shine before men. You realize the point is not that we identify with who we are, but it's rather about who we are in Christ and that we should let that light shine and through us.
- [6 : 12] You remember back the story of Moses, you know, when he had that time on the mountain where he was before the presence of God. And then after some time, he came back down and, you know, there he was up there 40 days and 40 nights and he had time of fellowship with God.
- After that point, after those 40 days and 40 nights, he came back down from the mountain and his face shined with this brilliance. And all of the people of Israel said, oh, we can't even bear to look at you that your light was shining from your face so much.
- You were just beaming. So they had to put something to cover his face. So I just wonder about your light. Are you shining the light of Christ to this dark world?
- The problem is maybe we don't have enough time with God. My challenge is that you would spend your time with God, that you would make the decision to invest the time with him every day because there are so many evil influences of this world and the things that will try to destroy you.
- And I am so excited to get to meet people and share with them about Christ. Recently, I met a young man from, he's wanting to go and work with the deaf in New Zealand.
- [7 : 36] And there are so many deaf all around the world. This largest unreached people group in the world. And there is a need in every country for reaching the deaf. But how could God use you to show your light?
- You need to spend more time, whether it's an hour or two hours, even three hours, because right now we have too many weak Christians in this country. But we need to be able to resist the temptation to live for ourselves, but say, I would rather to live for God.

To say, I want my time to be well spent with him and his presence, to be able to do his work even more effectively. And people always say, wow, you know, your life has changed so much since before when we knew you.

And you know, yeah, before I was involved in drinking and drugs and alcohol, like all these different things and partying, gambling. But you know, God was able to save me from those things.

I was able to have a change in my life. There was one couple, I'll share just a brief story. They were in, they were coming to my church and they were Catholics. But they would continue to come to our Baptist Deaf Church there in Greenville.

[8 : 42] And they were very resistant to me when I would try to explain to them the gospel. One day, the husband ended up in the hospital with cancer. And he did not have much time as he was already stage four.

So Mike and Kelly, I was able to explain the gospel right there in the hospital room. And they were both able to be saved. And they're both deaf, but they had never heard the truth of Jesus Christ before.

And then later when they both passed away, I know for sure that they are going to be, that they are in heaven because of their relationship with God. Because God loves everyone in the world, deaf and hearing.

And I love to honor and glorify our Father, which is in heaven. And I want His light to be what is shining in and through my life. To honor and glorify and exalt Him.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for allowing me to have just this opportunity, just to share a little bit of my life and my testimony here with the folks here.

[9 : 43] Just to know that God, you have done a wonderful miracle in my life and being able to change me. And Lord, here in the Atlanta area, here in this community, there are deaf that are lost and going to hell.

So Lord, I ask that you would help this church to be able to be a light here to the hearing, but as well to the deaf, to be able to show the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us.

We love you in Jesus' name. Amen. Wow.

I've heard his testimony several times and it still just puts me in awe to realize how God can use anyone. So many times we have excuses of why God can't use me.

I'm not skilled enough. I don't have enough time. I'm deaf. I'm not good with people. I'm too shy. There are so many excuses that we give.

[10 : 46] But realize that God has not only called us, but He has commanded us to be His light. To share the gospel with the lost and dying world.

And that's why we are missionaries to the deaf. Our mission board is Silent Word Ministries. And what we do is we take the gospel of Jesus Christ and share it with the deaf who otherwise would never be able to hear about Jesus Christ.

The largest unreached people group in the world. And I'm thankful to be able to come here and just share briefly about our ministry here to the deaf. Recently, we actually just got back from Las Vegas, of all places.

Sin City! We were able to go there. They had a large conference. They had over 5,000. It was about 5,200 deaf that all came to this big conference. So we took a team of deaf to that event.

And we were able to share the gospel. We were able to explain to these deaf. Many of them didn't even know who Jesus was. We would sign Jesus. We would fingerspell. And they were like, who is that?

[11 : 56] Because the deaf, they are never going to hear about Jesus on the radio. They're never going to hear about Jesus on TV. They're never going to hear it from street preachers or door knockers or any other way that most of us have heard the gospel.

How many of you, for the first time, heard about Jesus, heard the gospel from someone in your family? I'd like a raise of hands from either like a father, mother, grandparent, aunt, uncle. So a lot of you, right?

And that's how the percentage is run. I'll tell you, for deaf, that is not the case. For deaf, the statistics are staggering. 95% of parents, hearing parents of deaf children never even learned sign language to be able to communicate with their own children.

95% never learned to be able to communicate with their own kids. And I have found that statistic to be true. It's very rare to find deaf that have even a good relationship with their own parents, their own families.

Their parents are not going to share with them the gospel. So that's why God has been able to use us to go. During that time there in Las Vegas, we were able to see 68 deaths saved just in that one week.

[13 : 11] Praise the Lord. Be able to see his work accomplished. Even in a place that glorifies sin, God was honored. In even a place like in Las Vegas.

Just recently, last week, we were between meetings there in Louisville, Kentucky. And we stopped at a Starbucks of all places between the morning and evening service. And there as we walked into the Starbucks, there were some deaf chatting there.

And we noticed it's like, oh, cool. So we just left them and said, oh, it's okay. They're busy. No, we went over. We started chatting with these deaf. And you know what? A young girl that was 18 and 19.

Two young ladies. And we were able to just start a connection, a relationship with them. Just start chatting with them. But then we were able, they asked us, what do y'all do? That's a great question.

Let me tell you all about it. We were able to explain the gospel to these ladies. And praise the Lord. One had already been saved, but had fallen away from the Lord. But the other had no clue of who Jesus was.

[14 : 14] And that day, just recently, just last week, there at a Starbucks in Louisville, Kentucky, a deaf teen girl was saved. Because God has called us to work with the deaf all around the world.

Recently got back from Israel working with the deaf before that in Peru, before that in El Salvador. Learning the spoken Spanish as well as the sign languages of the different countries of how to more effectively reach the deaf all around the world.

Because like I said, there are lost deaf people in every country. I'm so thankful to be able to share about that part of our ministry. Going to briefly just share a couple verses with you.

If you would turn over to Romans. Romans chapter 10. Romans chapter 10.

Going to go ahead and start in verse 14. Or in verse 13. So Romans chapter 10 verse 13. It says, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[15 : 34] How then shall they call on him whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? There are so many deaf all around the world that have no preacher.

Have no way to have the word of God communicated to them. And it's such a glorious, amazing privilege to be able to share the gospel with them. I'd like to go ahead and just give you a thought.

If you would, just flip over to the PowerPoint, just to the main outline. Thinking about the deaf.

Who they are. Yeah, let's go ahead with the song. That works too. We have a music special we'd like to show for you tonight.

Just to see a little bit of who the deaf are. And how God can use us to be able to reach the deaf. Do we have that song ready? I saw a little boy shuffling sadly down the street.

[17 : 02] His parents sent him out to beg for food. People just passed by him.

And he gave up in defeat. He started weeping in the street right where he stood. I walked right over to him.

To see what I could do. He looked at me with sorrow in his eyes.

People said, don't waste your time. That boy, he cannot hear you. Then the deaf boy raised his hands.

And he cried. I am deaf. Do you care? That my soul is lost.

[17 : 59] I can't hear with my ears. But with my heart. Won't you please learn my language.

So that I can be saved. I'm a deaf boy. Do you care? In the Bible was a deaf man.

Whom the people brought to Jesus. They asked the Lord to put his hands on him. Jesus spoke and gave the word.

And then the man could hear. Then he straightway spoke and glorified the King. But here at home and other lands.

There are deaf by the thousands. Who've never heard the simple gospel plan. Won't you listen to God's call.

[19 : 05] And get to know these precious people. In the darkness around the world. They still are dying. We are deaf.

Do you care? That our souls are lost. We can't hear with our ears. But with our hearts.

Won't you please learn our language. So that we can be saved. We are deaf souls. Do you care?

I am deaf and someone cared. That my soul was lost. I couldn't hear with my ears. But with my heart.

Someone showed me in my language. That I could be saved. I'm a deaf soul. And someone cared.

[20 : 10] Won't you please learn our language. So that deaf can be saved. We are deaf souls. Do you care?

busy and interesting. Oh yeah. Thank you.

I don't care. You are deaf souls. Ashk Politbus. I don't care. And if that ain't fear. You're deaf souls. I would I not know. Simply [REDACTED] weekends of you. How shall they hear without a preacher?

How then shall they call on him whom they've not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they've not heard? The next verse says, how shall they preach except they be sent?

I'm thankful for God being able to send us, to be able to call us to this needed mission field. But we are just few of the laborers.

[21 : 14] Because there is a need for more. I'm praying that God would touch some of your hearts. To maybe be able to serve God in this needed mission field.

Thank you for your time.