

The importance of sharing your faith

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Good to see you here. I always enjoy being here, but I really don't like being here because of Daniel being unwell. But may the Lord quickly heal your throat.

I was a little bit concerned about the word. Is this what the Lord really wants?

I've been reading a book by A.W. Tozer, *God Tells a Man Who Cares*. Just as I was asking him to make sure I had the right word, and this is from chapter 7.

The mission of the church is to declare, to proclaim, to witness. She has been left on earth to be a witness to certain great eternal truths which she received from God and which the world could not possibly know unless she told them.

[1 : 06] And I want to speak this morning on how can they hear. Your outreach for Father's Day is really brilliant.

May I encourage everyone that's possible to go along to it? A number of years ago when our church was in Castle Bank Street in Leith, we'd take flowers like for Mother's Day.

We'd take flowers out, some daffodils out, and a card. And everyone we thought might be a mother, some were a little offended. But most of them really appreciated it. We'd give them a card and bless them and then a flower.

And on Father's Day we decided we'll get some chocolates. And we had little bars of chocolates and Father's Day cards, and we took them out to different people on the streets around Leith, the foot of Leith walk.

And one man, you know, when he received it, he really began to break down. He said, this is the first Father's Day card I ever received. We don't know how much our life will impact other people.

[2 : 19] A tiny little thing could make all the difference between life and death, eternity for one person. And that God has given us a challenge as a church to tell the world one of the songs we didn't get to sing.

I was about ready to have you sing it again, but such love. To be able to tell the world the incredible love of God. They're not going to know otherwise, especially with society the way it is.

But I want to read the scripture out of Romans chapter 10. Somebody asked me last time, what version was I reading? Because they didn't know what I was talking about.

This is out of the New Living Translation. Romans chapter 10, verses 9 to 17. If you openly declare that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God. It is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the scripture tells us, anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.

[3 : 40] Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear unless someone tells them?

And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the scriptures say, how beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news. But not everyone welcomes a good news.

For Isaiah the prophet said, Lord, who has believed our message? So faith comes by hearing. That is hearing the good news about Christ.

You and I have heard the good news, haven't we? And we've come to faith. And I encourage you, if there's anyone here that hasn't yet committed their life to Jesus, then this is a good time to do it.

[4 : 43] There's no better time than right now to make our lives right with God. We've joined together to grow in Jesus and in worship. We're treasuring God's word in our hearts, grateful that we have the freedom and liberty in our own language to not only read the word of God, but to come together and worship without being afraid of persecution.

But what about those six billion or more who don't know the one we treasure in our hearts? What about those in this city and this nation who haven't heard even once a clear presentation of the good news that we take for granted?

How can they believe if they haven't heard? How can they hear unless someone tells them? My mom and stepfather weren't Christians.

They didn't take us to church. They didn't send us to church. We lived six miles out in the country with no churches nearby at the time. But we had a postman. We lived out in the country, so you've probably seen these American films where the postman drives up and puts the mail in your postbox, and then some teenager comes along with a baseball bat and knocks it off.

But that didn't happen to our postbox, fortunately. But the postman were only hired to put the mail in our postbox, pick up any mail that was there, and keep going.

[6 : 09] But this one didn't stop there. He would drive up into our driveway, hand us the mail, and then tell us kids about Jesus. He could have just dropped the mail off.

A retired schoolteacher and her husband down the road would take me to church every Sunday. And it was there when I was about 10 or 12 that the gospel made sense, and I committed my life to the Lord.

And then Mabel, that schoolteacher, prayed for me for the rest of her life, 26 years, that I would continue to serve the Lord. How would I have heard unless someone told me?

I couldn't believe until I heard. But once I heard, it stirred my hunger for God until I came to faith.

Then God used me and others to reach my family.

Jimmy Su was a Buddhist, and Amin Susanto was a Muslim. And they came into this ice cream parlor in Indonesia where my missionary friend and I, Dan, were having ice cream.

[7 : 18] And the place was completely packed, and the only room left was two places at our table. And so my friend, Dan, invited them to sit down with us.

I was a little miffed at first because I thought, well, I was enjoying my conversation with my friend, and I didn't really want to be interrupted. But I realized quite quickly that God had different plans. So over our ice cream and over Jimmy's and Amin's ice cream, we were able to talk about Jesus and led those two 14-year-old boys to the Lord.

We never know the opportunities God's going to give us by just being open. And who was going to tell them?

How could they have believed if no one told them? Were there Buddhists and Muslim parents going to tell them about Jesus? So God sent them to someone who would.

[8 : 22] In John chapter 4, it records Jesus and his disciples heading through Samaria. It was a hot and tiring journey, so they stopped outside the town of Sychar for a rest.

Jesus told his disciples to head into the town for food. He probably wanted to get him out of the way so he could minister. And up comes this lady with a questionable lifestyle.

She had been married five times, and the one she was living with wasn't her husband. And Jesus began to whet her appetite. He began talking about living water.

He drew her out until she recognized that he was the Messiah that they were waiting for. And when she committed her life to the Lord, then she ran into the town, the town of the people that didn't really like her because of her lifestyle, and told them, he has told me everything that I have ever done.

And the whole town came to faith. How would they have come if he didn't tell them?

[9 : 34] Jesus came to seek and save the lost. It's important for us to remember his purpose for our lives. As it says in Matthew 28, 18 through 20, to go into all the world and share the good news and to make disciples of all nations.

You and I as believers have the most important and amazing job in this world. We are ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ.

I know that God calls certain people with certain ministry gifts. But it's not just the ministers in the traditional sense that have the calling.

Every believer has a calling to go and tell the good news to other people. It's not just this area is not going to come to the Lord.

No matter how anointed Daniel is, this community isn't going to come to the Lord just through him. The people in your neighborhood, you know people that Daniel does not know and that will never meet down here.

[10:43] You will have opportunities that no one else in the whole universe will have but just you. Because of the place that you live, the unique person that you are.

You and I and believers, we have a wonderful opportunity in ministry and calling. God wants to pack out heaven with men, women, and children of every language, race, and age.

In John 3, 16 and 17, Jesus declares, which I know you all haven't memorized, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, that the world through him might be saved. God doesn't want anyone to die without him.

He longs that everyone possible would repent and come to faith and have eternal life. And it's essential in our sharing, though, that we not only emphasize the love of God, but we also reveal that God is holy.

[11:55] I know that there's deception in parts of the church nowadays that, you know, God is love. You know, God doesn't care where you came from.

Well, in a sense, he doesn't care where you came from. But the thing is, he does care that we walk in holiness and purity. He calls his repentance and he's saved, doesn't he?

And with the word of God, as we tell people about the word of God and his love, we also need to remind them that he asks us when we come is to repent.

To come and repent from our sins, to turn from our sins and turn wholeheartedly to him. Like Jesus, we must be loving, patient, compassionate, not judgmental.

We must speak the truth in love and not let fear of man keep us from warning others. Jesus didn't condemn the woman caught in adultery or the man healed at the pool of Bethesda, but he did tell them to go and sin no more.

[13:02] How would they have heard unless Jesus told them? How will those around you and me hear unless you and I tell them? They may not receive immediately.

They may react rather badly at first, as my father did when I first shared with him. But as we're patient, pray for them, are available to answer their questions and forgive them for any negative response.

The Holy Spirit will water the seeds of life we plant. And it's hard, isn't it, when you want to share with somebody that you desperately want to come to faith.

And then you're scared because they will react, right? How many love people reacting to you? We don't, do we? We want people to be nice to us.

We want them to respond well. But the thing is that some people, when we share life to them, they're going to react. It's kind of, it's the same way if you bring somebody out of a completely darkened room and bring them into a room filled with light, they're going to react, don't they?

[14:14] They're going to respond to that. It's going to be a shock. And for some people, when they hear the good news, they're going to react in a negative way to us.

And I know when we have, at different times I've taken care of children. And I'm not, I wouldn't be a very good children's worker.

But at times I've taken care of children. And, you know, kids are very honest, aren't they? And sometimes you upset them so they'll yell at you, I hate you, you know.

Which used to get me because I was a little insecure growing up. But then after a while I thought, well, God loves me, so it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. So when kids would yell at me, I hate you, I just say, well, I love you anyway.

Which really got off your nose. And when we realize that God wants us to tell people the good news. That it doesn't matter how they're going to react.

[15:18] That you're going to love them anyway. I had two friends at university, friends that I really liked. And when I told them about Jesus, they didn't want anything, they just cut me off completely.

Didn't want anything to do with me before. And, but I just kept praying for them. Bill and Jerry just kept praying for them. That God would move in their lives.

And I hadn't seen them for ages. But at Jerry's house, he had let me store a couple of boxes of books with them. And I wanted to go pick those up because then I had another place to stay. And I had something else that I wanted to do that afternoon. So it was just a quick trip, open up my boxes and brush off. And, but then my, both friends were there. Both Bill and Jerry were there. And so they started asking questions. And I was looking at my watch because I had this other appointment I needed to go to. And they asked more questions about Jesus.

[16:20] And I looked at my watch and I still needed to go. And I never did make it to the other appointment. Because they kept asking questions until finally I said, You want to give your hearts to the Lord, don't you?

And they did. How would they have come to the Lord if I hadn't told them? Even though my interest was someplace else.

That God says, no, this is their time. How would they have come unless I told them? You and I can't save people, at least not spiritually.

Only Jesus can do that because of his sacrifice on the cross. We are called, however, to plant the seeds, to share the good news and make them disciples when they respond.

God is responsible to take what we share and then bring them to salvation. I love it when people come to faith. It's an amazing miracle.

[17:20] The scripture reminds us that all the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner comes to faith. And sometimes we gloss over that, don't we?

Heaven has a party. That word rejoice means to jump up and spin around. They get excited when one person who's heard the good news responds and comes to faith in Jesus.

But how can they hear if no one tells them? At Easter, I gave our paper boy a chocolate Easter egg, his money for the papers, and then a tri-crank book.

And the next week, he came back and said he was really touched. The booklet really spoke to him. I don't find it very easy to share with others.

But God has enabled me to share Jesus with people on building sites, in ice cream parlors, and taxis, on airplanes, at airports while waiting for flights, in a workshop with a bunch of grubby jobs to do and really immoral type guys, at our church cafe, to photocopier salesmen.

[18:38] That's, I think, the bane of ministers' existence is photocopier salesmen. To young mothers at nursery and even through preaching. But it's not.

Most of the opportunities I have have just been out there in everyday life. Opportunities that God opens up. How would they have heard otherwise unless someone tells them?

You don't have to be an evangelist or go to Bible school to be effective in sharing with others. You can be a brand new Christian or been around for a while. It's just taking what you know about Jesus and share that in faith.

Then let the Holy Spirit make it life. When you look at 1 John chapter 1, what did John say that he had to share about Jesus? He says, That which we have tasted and handled and seen.

And that is what people want to hear. How has Jesus touched your life? What has he done in your life that's unique?

[19:49] You're not to share my testimony, but each of you that have come to faith, you have a testimony. And that is what will touch somebody else, because that's what's real.

If you go and quote everybody else's testimony, then that's not real for you or for the people that your life touches. And you may not think you have much of a testimony, but right now, if you put your faith in Jesus, you have a testimony that can touch somebody else.

Doesn't have to be dramatic. To say, maybe you went through a difficult time, a bereavement, and you knew God's peace and joy in the midst of it.

Well, talk to your neighbor about that, that maybe has just gone through a bereavement. To let people know that there is hope. That God has kept us in difficult circumstances.

That he has given us peace where before we had tormented minds. That every one of us have something to share. But it needs to be what has touched us.

[20:56] Jesus calls us to compel people to come into his kingdom.

We're to go into the highways and byways and bring them in. Not just wait for them to drop in at our service times and special events. The Lord wants you and me to pray for opportunities to share with those around us and others he leads us to.

They may never hear otherwise. You know, one of the, I'm not sure where I heard it, maybe it was in Lisa's admission when I was going through their discipleship training.

But they talked about divine appointments. Prayed for the divine appointments. And what it is, is you're asking God to give you specific opportunities to share with somebody else.

It may be with your family. It may be a friend that you've, you want to talk to, but nothing's ever worked out. But to pray for divine appointments. Pray for opportunities so that God will open them up.

[22 : 09] And when he opens them up, then take them. Because that's when their hearts will be ready to hear. God hasn't called us to be under guilt or condemnation.

We can't witness to everyone. And even with those we do share, not everyone will respond. But we can make ourselves available to God to go where he leads and share as the Holy Spirit gives us opportunity.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for the work that these folks have for over 40 years that have witnessed salt and light in this community.

And the many people that have come to faith by just them being here, by having special meetings, by going door to door, by having the over 55s club, and so many other things, and children that come out of unbelieving families and children's clubs, they've heard the good news and come to faith.

Their hearts have been stirred, Lord. And that people have gone on from that initial witness to serve you. But Lord, I believe that you have even greater things for this fellowship.

[23 : 24] That Lord, you have a whole new crop of believers you want to bring in. That Lord, you want to anoint this fellowship. And each as a fellowship and as individuals to be even more effective in sharing the good news that has transformed their lives.

And I pray that that anointing would come upon them, that you would stir each one of us, Father God, to take every opportunity possible to share the good news about your incredible love and forgiveness and hope and joy and peace.

That, Father, that we can let people know they don't have to carry the guilt, the burden of guilt and shame anymore. But they can walk in freedom and liberty and wholeness in you.

Lord, they're not going to hear unless we tell them. So we pray that you would anoint us to go with the same passion that you came to earth to tell us that we might have life.

Lord, I bless this fellowship. Lord, I thank you for Westerhaes Baptist. Bless them. Make them even more fruitful in the days ahead. And Father, we agree together for your wholeness to Pastor Ralph that you'd make him whole, that you'd heal his throat, his lungs, make him completely whole.

[24 : 44] And that, Father, you would give him an ever-increasing anointing, Father God, to not only build up this congregation, to lead them into the fullness of your word, but to motivate them to go out in the power of your Holy Spirit to reach others.

And Father, we thank you for this in that incredible and wonderful and powerful name of your son Jesus. Amen. Amen. Let's finish.