

Doing the Stuff – Speaking of Jesus

This morning we are continuing our series called 'Doing the Stuff' which crescendos with a weekend conference in March. I hope this teaching series will just be the beginning of a chapter, and a fun one for Leeds Vineyard.

Doing the stuff is about doing, doing the stuff we read about in the Bible.

This week I am teaching on 'sharing our faith'. This title alone could make some of you feel like an Arctic River, 'frozen at the mouth'. I hope this morning will give a liberal burst of global warming or like a nice brew on a cold day, defrost our mouths and free us up to enjoy talking of Jesus.

When reading about Jesus in Matthews gospel the first thing we really hear Jesus say as he begins his ministry, he preaches, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near" I think it is quite easy from this to mis interpret how Jesus preaches and proclaims the Kingdom and shares the good news, let me explain.

This week I was in a supermarket and I opted for self-scanning of my shopping. I had my gadget and I scanned items as I went round the shop. I picked up a newspaper and it did not scan, so I get a warning 'not scanned please declare item to a member of staff'. So I was to declare my non-scanned goods. When I got to the counter I did not suddenly shout 'I declare that my paper did not scan, please re-scan so I can purchase it'. No I just said hello to one of the staff, asked for help in paying for the paper and paid. The member of staff even showed me how to use the self-serve till to scan it myself.

I get the sense sharing our faith training can often be like [loud voice] 'I declare my paper did not scan', but I want to remove those misconceptions. Not just the misconceptions but also the short term motivators of guilt, fear and shame. Do away with a focus on apologetics that stops people from even starting a conversation and do away with types of sales techniques they are not needed or appropriate. I hope to lower the bar of sharing our faith, so low it is just a simple self-serve type experience; simple and effective.

OK, to get in the dynamic of sharing, let's get talking to each other. So to a person near you, describe to them something you have been to, seen or done recently that you enjoyed, maybe a meal, film, bike ride, walk, etc...

Off you go, you may want to introduce yourselves.

Did anyone find that hard?

Did anyone get any opposition to what they said?

So when it comes to talking of Jesus, let us share what we love, with people we love.

If we take that as a basis; share what we love, with people we love, then only two main things can make that difficult.

1. We don't feel we know and are impacted with the love of Jesus
2. We don't know how to love people or connect with them deeply enough.

But even if they are the case for you, you are actually in a great place this morning to help with both.

So I have 6 points, the first couple are more detailed then 4 very quick;

1 Focus exclusively on Jesus

When you are talking to people bring the focus to Jesus. Don't talk about Christianity, Religion or even Church. Just talk about Jesus.

Christianity, Religion and often Church can put people off and we don't want to do that.

You see I don't think Jesus came to start a religion, or to start Christianity. To put it another way, Did Jesus come for religion or relationship? I would say relationship. Jesus came so our relationship with him can be restored, he came to save us. Religion does not save us, Jesus does.

Focus on Jesus, talk exclusively about Jesus.

In reading the gospels how do we see people engaging with Jesus? The disciples they are asked to follow just follow and learn along the way, so let us help others to do the same. The disciples asked questions of Jesus like; what were you talking about Jesus?, how do you want us to feed 5000 or 4000 people?, are you meant to be overthrowing the ruling Romans?

Maybe we expect people to follow this all at once, understand to whole thing, the disciples didn't. For our friends and people we meet we should not expect them or need them to follow it all at once.

If we look at what happens in the Stories of Jesus in the Gospels, we see that people are drawn to Jesus, by his; miracles, teaching, his prophecy. The people who followed Jesus did not understand it all, but they followed and picked up understanding as the encountered more of Him.

Just another thing, if we get a bit stuck in a conversation and you don't know how to answer ask if you can get back to them on that subject, then go and learn about it, read your Bible, talk with people in your housegroup. Share faith and then learn more about it.

So talk about Jesus.

If we talk about Jesus, people we may hear back that Jesus was a good teacher, if so ask which part of his teaching do you like the most? Or Jesus was a good man? What do you

mean by good, or what is it to be a good man or woman these days. That would be an interesting conversation to have.

2. Listen to what people say and create connection as deeply as possible

I believe that God is at work in the lives of everyone on the planet. He loves us all. I also believe he is not working at a shallow level, God is working at a deep level with all of us. Therefore if we create connection that goes deep, we often see where God is at work. I believe, think and hope we are only a question away from many, many people encountering Jesus in their lives in a deep and new way. We need to connect, listen and just ask one more question.

How we connect:

1. Name
2. Something about the space, place or geography of where you are (building, weather, journey)
3. Then something near the common experience e.g. What do you do with your time, for work, where are you from, how long have you been doing that

It is then really easy to stop there, but just ask another question...

What have you been learning in your marriage or from being a Dad, being a mum

Your Job - what is the hope or dream for your job.

What is your hope for your kids? For retirement?

Jesus asks lots of questions, just ask questions.

You may need to create situations to at least have a conversation, some things that have been really helpful to me, just to get to know people a bit and have a conversation: getting people at BT work together for lunch - always better than sandwiches alone at your desk, have a coffee break together, attend training courses - there is usually some discussion that goes a bit deeper on those. It is often about being a bit more available and suggesting something, just be creative.

In this time we often are asked questions, so be prepared to share about your life, hopes, dreams and your story of Jesus in your life making a difference.

3. Share stories, all the time about Jesus.

Tell others about how Jesus impacts me, stories in your life, things you have seen happen in people's lives.

You may get a chance to share your story - so be prepared and adaptable.

Also really simple what are your three favourite stories about Jesus or parables he told. Tell those stories or re-tell them so they are in the context of the conversations you are having - something to work on.

4. Don't argue or be judgemental

Do not ever, ever, ever argue. DON'T

Arguing is a defensive response because we are insecure. We are secure in Jesus, Jesus does not need a defence. Don't argue, don't be judgemental.

5. Demonstration is persuasion.

Show them what it is like to follow Jesus. Pray and care for people, love our neighbours.

Do what you do if you were in housegroup - if somebody is ill, offer to pray for them, if they are having a tricky time make them a meal, questions of life, etc...

6. Be patient and trust the process.

Pray like crazy, but also remember we can't save them. It is Not up to us, but God chooses to work with us. It is God who saves. This really helps me, as I long to see people come to know Jesus, because it is great following Jesus and knowing his love. Trust the process.

It may be to us or someone else who says to a person, Do you want to follow Jesus or Do you want to humble your heart and follow Jesus? And they say yes. But it has to start somewhere, so start with Speaking of Jesus to people.

Do the stuff - talk about Jesus

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