

January 7, 2018 AM  
Pastor Ken Hepner

***FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:***  
***1. "Why God Establishes His People on the Earth***  
***Psalm 65:1 – 5***

**Introduction:**

This morning we are beginning to study what the Lord has to say to each one of us about people in our sphere of influence who do not yet know the Lord Jesus, or perhaps one time did know Him, but now do not walk with Him in any personal way.

The topic is "Friendship Evangelism," or what it means to be sincere friends who care about the spiritual welfare of people in our spheres of influence. Let's be really honest and admit the fact that there are literally hundreds of people in our families, workplaces, school rooms, and neighborhoods who have never had a clear witness to the Gospel of Jesus presented to them in a way they could understand, from someone they love and trust!

And let's also be clear about what the Bible says the Gospel of Jesus Christ really is. Paul in writing to the Roman Christians in the first century shared truth that was inspired in his heart by the Holy Spirit. Paul had encountered Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road and he found that what he had been striving for his entire life, could only be found by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross.

Paul writes in Romans 1:16, 17 *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Bring up the topic of **Evangelism** and **Witnessing** and many Christians have sweaty palms and anxiety attacks because of stereotypes flash through our minds. We might see the person with the gift of evangelism who can lead the person to Christ seated beside them on an airplane. We hear such gifted people telling all of the rest of us that we need to be more bold in sharing our faith "cold-turkey" with everyone we meet whether they like it or not.

Perhaps we have been made to feel guilty if we don't or have sweaty palms at the prospect of having to lasso someone and tell them the four spiritual laws! I actually had one person tell me that if I don't have a few people angry with me because I have tried to tell them about Jesus too much, I am failing as God's servant! No guilt there!

The truth is there are some people who are supernaturally gifted with the **Gift of Evangelism**. But that is a relatively small part of the Body of Christ worldwide. Statistics say less than 6% of Christians actually are gifted with the gift of Evangelism. We are not all called nor are we gifted to be evangelists. But when the Holy Spirit comes to live in our lives and makes our spirit alive with Christ, He does ask **All** of **Us** to **Bear Witness** to others about what He is

doing in our lives! What that means is to be ready to tell people the story of what Jesus has been doing in our lives, what Jesus means to you and me!

The people in our spheres of influence need to know the truth that God is not MAD AT THEM! In fact, God loves them with an everlasting love! There is a Scripture many of us, who grew up involved in a Sunday School class, have memorized from our earliest childhood. John 3:16 *“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.”*

In Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, He paints the picture of the Father God’s longing heart for people to return to Him and know Him, through the dad longing for his boy to return, looking down the road near his home for the lost son. When he sees his son in the distance he runs to him and embraces him.

The Biblical picture the Lord has given to me for this message is is reason why God established His **Church**, why we are here on earth as the **People of God**. The truth of why God has always had a people is so that He could live among them and pour out His rich blessings of love, mercy, and grace in their lives. He does this so that the result is through these God-touched, love-filled lives, people who didn’t yet know Him could see him and His wonderful works as they look at the lives of people He is blessing.

In the Old Testament you have the picture of the people of Israel. God chose them and created them to be His chosen and holy people, a kingdom of priests who would declare His wonders. He did this so that through them He would make **All The Nations** among which they lived see His grace, glory, and goodness. Rather than being wholly His they became like the nations among whom they lived and they were severely punished for that indiscretion.

In the New Testament you have the picture of the church of Jesus Christ as the people of God. This is a people in whom He dwells by the Holy Spirit. He first does His work in us then through us when the church gathers in the Name of Jesus for worship and prayer. The age of the church of Jesus is still going strong. The church is the **Vehicle** God has chosen to use to **Proclaim** His grace, glory, and goodness to the people groups, the nations of the world so that they may see Him, meet him, and be saved.

What I’d like for us to see is what has always been in God’s heart is a **Theology of Blessing**. God promised to so bless the lives of His people that those who looked at the lives of His sons and daughters would see there is something uniquely different about our lives. The blessing of the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives is, therefore, a vehicle to demonstrate God’s mercy and grace to others so that they’ll want to know the Lord.

From my viewpoint this concept of a theology of blessing is expressed over and over again in the Scriptures. One of the clearest places where the theology of blessing producing a godly response in an pagan or unbelieving heart is in what happened when the Queen of Sheba came and visited Solomon and saw the wonders of his palace, his servants, his wisdom creating a beautiful way of life for the people of Israel.

This woman who came from a perspective of worshipping the gods of darkness and “Mother Earth Theology,” expressed by the people of North Africa, said, II Chronicles 9:8 “**Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the Lord your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them to maintain justice and righteousness.**”

### **I. A People of Praise:**

Psalm 65:1 “*Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled.*”

**One thing that I think it is just too easy to lose sight of is the fact that worship exists by and for God.** We gather here week after week to give to worship acts to God Almighty because He is worthy of our love, honor, and praise. The methods of worship are not really the issue; to hymn or not to hymn, to chorus or not to chorus. **Worship has little to do with how we express it and everything to do with the heart as we express it!**

The fact is that all of us have a “heart music” that we can easily connect to, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with liking music or worship styles that “touch our hearts.” When we are able to touch and be touched by God that is really sweet to us! But it is just too easy to get all caught up in “my preferred style of worship.” I like hymns, organ and piano, and specials. Or, I like choruses and the leadership of a worship team. This is all well and good.

But when we actually miss the point that worship is something we are giving to God we can easily divide over worship style and throw barbed words at our brothers and sisters. When we do so we have missed the whole point of for whom we are here. Those people in the second service just want rock and roll in the church and that isn’t worship. Those people in the first service are set in their ways and that isn’t worship.

It becomes too easy to miss the fact that what we do and what we say as and how we say it, only matters to God if we have truly meant business with Him when we said it! The truth is that all of us, regardless of our “heart music” or our preferred worship style, **Exist for His Glory.** The goal of worship, therefore, isn’t about me and what I like, it is about God and what He likes. He “*desires truth in the inward parts.*” “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise!*” “*This is the one I esteem, says the Lord, he who is humble and contrite and trembles at my word.*”

This word from David in Psalm 65:1 says that **our Praise awaits his Presence.** In other words when we gather here in the Name of Jesus each week, it is to be done with an inner anticipation that the Lord Jesus is here, by His Holy Spirit, in our midst, and that he wants to be at work in each one of our hearts transforming our lives from within.

The Christian life, which is portrayed for us in the Bible, is wholly about change. It is characterized by the **Dynamic** of the Holy Spirit of God living in each one of us like a **Fire** in our **Hearts**. Fire changes the composition of what it touches! What Jesus dwells in He makes holy! May I ask you a straight question? How has the Lord worked in your life to change you

in the last three months? What has that change He has done in your heart changed in your attitude as you come to worship Him alone or at church?

What this calls us to see, understand, and respond to is the Biblical call to **Heartfelt Surrender** to the sweet voice of conviction of the Holy Spirit as He leads us to love Jesus. I am not responsible to change myself by my own grit, will, or determination. I am only responsible to get alone with the Lord each new day and to invite the Holy Spirit of God to do His transforming works in my heart, to surrender myself more deeply to Him so that He can make me more like Jesus! That is the fruit of a worshipful lifestyle!

## **II. A People of Prayer:**

Psalm 65:2 *“O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come.”*

Psalm 65:5 *“You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth.”*

As the people of God one of the things we are by reason of our spiritual life is a people who are absolutely **Committed to Prayer**. Far too many people in the church today see prayer as a rhetorical experience. So when I use words like commitment to prayer the inner message is, “oh brother, more duties!” It is viewed as a discipline to be maintained instead of a loving relationship to be cultivated. Small wonder prayer is such a low priority.

When the Holy Spirit comes to live in a believer’s life, **Prayer** is seen not as a **Duty** but as an expression of **Love**! It is seen as a two-way communication with Almighty God. It involves both talking to Him and listening to Him. God welcomes us and bids us to come to Him in heartfelt prayer. We are committed to prayer because it is the means of deepening our intimacy with God.

Hebrews 4:16 *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

I Thessalonians 5:17, 18 *“pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Prayer is the language faith expresses itself in. If we truly believe God then the natural outgrowth of that belief is a vibrant and alive prayer life. Hebrews 11:6 *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because **anyone who comes to him** must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him**.”*

The second thing about a meaningful prayer life that is just awesome to think about is that **God Hears our Prayer**. What tends to happen to us over time is that we pray about things a few times and nothing happens, or we pray about something that is really on our hearts for a loved one and things get worse. If we miss the relational aspects of our prayer life we can easily lose heart and get discouraged!

That doesn't mean that God didn't hear us. Sometimes his answer is, "No," Sometimes it is, "Wait for it." Sometimes the answer is "How badly do you really want me to do this?" When Jesus taught on prayer He taught there are **three levels of prayer: Asking, Seeking, and Knocking, representing three different levels of intensity.**

I believe everyone knows how to ask God for things. But few people know what seeking prayer is, earnestly longing for God to act in someone's life or some need. I believe fewer people still know what it means to persistently knock in prayer on the door of a will that is closed to the Gospel!

The third thing about meaningful prayer is that **God Answers our prayer** that is prayed in keeping with His will and purposes. I John 5:14, 15 *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him."*

Remember my brothers and sisters, our **Standing before God** is that we are His sons and daughters of the Most High heavenly Father God. I really don't think we get this as well as we should get this! I must tell you as pappy Hepner when one of my little grandchildren steps in the door and yells, "Hey Pap!" my ears perk up and I come out to meet him or her. I know the child is saying, "Pappy, I'm here; let the good times roll!"

That sense of excitement and anticipation is how your Father God waits for you to walk into His presence as His son or daughter. I think all of our prayer lives would be markedly different if we believed the truth that God Almighty is genuinely happy to engage with us as we intercede before Him for things and people we love!

### **III. A People Who've Experienced His Power:**

Psalm 65:3, 4 *"When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions. Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple."*

The Psalmist David takes us back to **What we Once Were**, before God worked in our hearts and began His transformation of our lives. What **Jesus has done in our Hearts** is absolutely wonderful to think about and meditate upon. The Lord Jesus chose to become a human being so He could have a human body to offer up to the Father God, as a perfect sacrifice for sin. What we look to is the precious blood of Christ, with the power to cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death.

I Peter 1:18, 19 *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."*

I never tire of thinking about what Jesus was willing to do for us so that we could personally experience the grace and the mercy of God. But it gets better than merely looking at and being touched by our forgiveness of sins and cleansing of our hearts and guilty consciences.

David also talks about the indescribable privilege of our being called out of the worldly ways we used to live, not being merely about getting rid of the bad things we did as though all we got is spiritual fire insurance from Hell. It is also about **being Drawn Near to God's Presence** by His indwelling Spirit, welcomed in His courts as sons and daughters. David says, *"Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple"*

#### **IV. A People Devoted to Disciple-Making:**

Psalm 65:2 *"O you who hear prayer, to you **all men** will come."*

Psalm 65:5 *"You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness, O God our Savior, the hope of **all the ends of the earth.**"*

I may be extremely elementary in my thinking here, but I believe the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ is the heart's cry, the deep inner longing of every person who lives in this mailing address. They may not know it or understand it but there is a God-shaped vacuum in all of our hearts that He alone can fill. I am convinced what the culture around us rejects is not the Lord Jesus. What they reject is "churchianity" because let's face it, people can get hurt badly in churches, even those with the best of intentions.

If the people of this community, your family, neighbors, and friends come here and are able to see Jesus' works in our hearts and lives, that there is a sense of the Holy One invading our lives, something in them will click. "I can feel something drawing my heart by what I see here!" They will respond with a heart to know Him whom we know.

The Scriptures are very clear, James 4:8, *"If we draw near to God he will draw near to us."* We come to this place because we are a people of faith, who draw near to God believing He exists and rewards those who earnestly seek Him. As the Lord does His work in our lives it is not about you and me. It is always about the heart of God and the calling of God to be concerned about **Disciple-Making**. True discipleship in His kingdom always results in disciple-making!

Where **Jesus commands His Blessing to flow** into the lives of His worshipping, praying, and cleansed people, the Lord God uses His blessing as a vehicle to draw people's hearts to Himself, the Lord gathers people! The Word of God is filled with references that God is a gatherer, who loves, woos, and draws to Himself:

Over and over again in the written word of God we read about God's heart crying out for the people of **All Nations** – that is it is God's passionate heart-cry that people from every nation on the earth will come to know Him as Lord and Savior before it is too late! And folks, there are people from many nation, heritages living right here in Juniata County! Pray for the success of these Spanish speaking churches in our area. Because if people meet Jesus here in a real way they may return to their land of origin as missionaries!

Again and again the Scriptures declare the deep love of God for **All Peoples** – people groups are subdivisions of nations, and God is concerned about every person in every people group! Recently when we were together with brother Bijoy Roul, he told us there are over 700 dialects in his home country of India!

So let's be clear as we think our way through the implications of this message for each one of our lives. The work of the Holy Spirit is to **Draw Us after His heart of love for the unchurched and prechristian people among whom we live.** His transforming work done in each one of us isn't because we are such wonderful people and that we deserve the best the Christian life has to offer.

The transforming power and love of God are shed abroad into our hearts so that God can use the life-change we are experiencing to demonstrate His blessing to others.

**FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:**  
**1. "Why God Establishes His People on the Earth"**  
**Psalm 65:1 – 5**

**Introduction:**

Our topic for the first part of 2018 is "Friendship Evangelism." This is a fancy title for choosing to be **F** \_\_\_\_\_ who genuinely **C** \_\_\_\_\_ about the spiritual welfare of others! ... What the Bible says the Gospel of Christ Jesus is, Romans 1:16, 17.

Bring up the topic of **E** \_\_\_\_\_ and **W** \_\_\_\_\_ and many Christians get sweaty palms and anxiety because of the stereotypes we have seen!

The truth is there's a very small percentage of people in the body of Christ worldwide with the **G** \_\_\_\_\_ of **E** \_\_\_\_\_ but when the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts He asks us all to **B** \_\_\_\_\_ **W** \_\_\_\_\_.

The word the Lord has given me to begin this series is why God established His **C** \_\_\_\_\_ on earth as the **P** \_\_\_\_\_ of **G** \_\_\_\_\_.

In the Old Testament God chose the nation of Israel, called them to be holy priests before Him to declare His wonders among them. He did this so **A** \_\_\_\_\_ the **N** \_\_\_\_\_ around them could see His grace, glory, and goodness.

Today we live in the age of the Church of Jesus. We are His chosen **V** \_\_\_\_\_ to **P** \_\_\_\_\_ God's grace, glory, and goodness!

The Scriptures point us to a **T** \_\_\_\_\_ of **B** \_\_\_\_\_ meaning God wants to so bless our lives, work in us, transform our desires, that the people we love can see His presence living in us... One of the clearest pictures of the theology of blessing is what the Queen of Sheba said to King Solomon, II Chronicles 9:8.

**I. A People of Praise and Worship:** Psalm 65:1

The truth we better get settled is the fact that **W** \_\_\_\_\_ **E** \_\_\_\_\_ by and for God! ... We all have a "**H** \_\_\_\_\_ **M** \_\_\_\_\_" a style of singing, a type of music that speaks to our heart. We completely miss the point of worship when we make it about "our style" and criticize other styles as inferior to ours.

Regardless of our heart music it exist by and for God. It is not about what we like; it is about what God likes ... We would all do well to hear David's words as he begins this Psalm, "Lord our **P** \_\_\_\_\_ **A** \_\_\_\_\_ Your **P** \_\_\_\_\_!"

The Christian life is characterized by the **D** \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit living in each one of us like a **F** \_\_\_\_\_ in our **H** \_\_\_\_\_!

What worship calls us to see is our need of heartfelt **S** \_\_\_\_\_ to the voice of the Spirit of Jesus as He convicts us of our need to know Him.

**II. A People of Prayer:** Psalm 65:2, 5

A vital part of our spiritual life together is the **C** \_\_\_\_\_ to **P** \_\_\_\_\_ ... When the Spirit lives in us we see prayer not as a **D** \_\_\_\_\_ to perform but as an expression of **L** \_\_\_\_\_. Hebrews 4:16, I Thess. 5:17, 18, Hebrews 11:6

A second vital truth about our prayer life is that God **H**\_\_\_\_\_ our **P**\_\_\_\_\_. Jesus talked about three graduating levels of intensity in our prayer lives ... **A**\_\_\_\_\_ ... **S**\_\_\_\_\_ ... **K**\_\_\_\_\_ on a closed door!

The third thing to remember is that God **A**\_\_\_\_\_ prayer that is surrendered to His will! I John 5:14, 15 ... Remember our **S**\_\_\_\_\_ before God is sons and daughters of God!

**III. A People Who Have Experienced His Power:** Psalm 65:3, 4

David reminds of what we **O**\_\_\_\_\_ **W**\_\_\_\_\_ before God worked in our hearts. What Jesus has done in our hearts is wonderful truth to meditate on. --Our redemption price ... I Peter 1:18, 19

David reminds us being called away from our worldly ways is not just about getting rid of what was bad. It is also about being **D**\_\_\_\_\_ **N**\_\_\_\_\_ to God's presence by His Spirit as we pray.

**IV. A People Devoted to Disciple-Making:** Psalm 65:2, 5

People who are apart from Christ, unchurched generally like what they see in Jesus! What they reject is "**C**\_\_\_\_\_!" If people come to a house of believers and see and feel Jesus in their midst, He will draw them!

As Jesus does a work of transforming love in you and me it is never just about us ... It is always about **D**\_\_\_\_\_ -**M**\_\_\_\_\_. Jesus commands His blessings of love and grace to flow into us for **A**\_\_\_\_\_ **N**\_\_\_\_\_ and **A**\_\_\_\_\_ **P**\_\_\_\_\_.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in believers to **D**\_\_\_\_\_ us to genuinely **L**\_\_\_\_\_ and **C**\_\_\_\_\_ about unchurched people!

### Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. What is your perspective as to why God has wired into the Scriptures a concern about “all nations” and “all people groups” as far back as Genesis 12?
2. Can you explain the difference between people who have the “gift of evangelism and the role of all of us as Christians bearing witness to the work of Jesus in our lives?
3. Have you ever thought about the Scriptural “theology of blessing” that God desires to so bless His people in order to demonstrate to others what a God-blessed life looks like, making them desire to know God too?
4. Why do you think the Lord draws His people to experience corporate worship exists? What is the purpose of corporate worship?
5. What do you think about the concept that our prayer lives are one expression of worshipping the Lord with a sincere heart?
6. What is the difference between the intensity levels of asking prayer, seeking prayer, and knocking prayer? Why does Jesus create these distinctions?
7. Why does King David tell us to remember what we once were before we experienced the grace and mercy of God? Why is that important to consider?
8. Discuss together the concept that people in our spheres of influence often do not reject Jesus as a Person of the Godhead outright, but rather reject what they have seen in some churches.
9. Read together aloud Matthew 28:18 – 20 and Acts 1:8 and discuss insights you have regarding the mandate to Christian witnessing and disciple-making.
10. As we look at the lives of people in your family, your friends, neighbors, workplace acquaintances, schoolroom classmates, are there any that come to mind that are in your life specifically for you to care about their eternal soul? Have you prayed earnestly for them? Have you shared your story with them?