

January 28, 2018 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:
4. “Living Together as a Church Full of Stars”
Philippians 2:14 – 18

Introduction:

This morning as we turn our attention to the Word of the Lord we are looking at the theme of “Friendship Evangelism.” This is simply a fancy term for being sincere, loving, and caring people who have experienced the gift of God’s grace and mercy and deeply desire to help other people in our sphere of influence to experience what the Lord Jesus has done in our hearts and lives.

The Biblical call to **Make Disciples** is the main reason why the people of God are on planet earth. We are here to bear witness to His mercy and grace in our lives, to those who have not yet experienced Him. The Lord Jesus made it very clear that the reason He came to earth was to destroy the devil’s works in the lives of people – that is sin, darkness, destruction of lives, and spiritual death.

I John 3:8b *“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”*

Hebrews 2:14, 15 *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

Jesus made what He came to earth to do, very clear to His followers at Zacchaeus’ house when He said, *“The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

Right before He went back to heaven Jesus left marching orders with His closest followers. The **Marching Orders** are found in two passages of Scripture that we have all heard and read many times, perhaps even have memorized. But Jesus is asking all of us who call Cedar Grove Church our Church home to actually do what He instructed us to do.

Matthew 28:18 – 20 *“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.’”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

When we become His sons and daughters, some very beautiful things happen to us. As His Holy Spirit comes to live in us at our invitation to Him, He begins rather remarkable life change in two regards.

a. First – we **Experience His Nature** as He comes to live in us by His Spirit, and we experience inner transformation immediately. Jesus, in one of His tremendous “I am” statements, said some rather blunt things about this in John 8:12 *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

b. Second – We **Grow in His Likeness** as we come to know Him and mature in our walk with Him. Listen to the words of Scripture: Matthew 5:14: *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”* II Corinthians 4:6 *“For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*

Bottom line stuff here folks, we have each been given a **Sphere of Influence**. Matthew 5:13 – 16, are words of the Lord Jesus in which we are told we are salt, light, and a city on a hill. Each of these things relates to influence. Salt influences food, light influences darkness, and a city on a hill influences travelers, so they can find their way.

Paul wrote a text that serves as a word picture of our witness we bear to other people, in Philippians 2:14 – 16a: *“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.”*

These powerful words are set in the context of our being like Jesus, having a similar attitude as He possessed. They follow immediately, in the paragraph, the command to go on *“working out your salvation in fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purposes.”*

This is a powerful text, which speaks to the issue of our **Witnessing** to others. The Biblical connotation is that of an eyewitness account, someone who actually was there and has seen for him or herself.

I don’t know what comes to your mind when you hear the word “witnessing.” In the minds of many, we see two guys wearing white shirts, ties, and nametags on bikes riding around a neighborhood getting doors slammed in their faces. Or perhaps you heard a seminar from someone with an obvious gift of evangelism teaching you how to win everyone you meet in an airplane, to Christ in 39 seconds.

Perhaps you have read the classic book: “How to Win Souls” and feel guilty because it just doesn’t happen for you like that, so you languish under a burden to do something that makes you palms sweaty. What I propose to us today is that we first and foremost take the **Burden** out of loving others and telling them our story and that we remove all of the **Guilt Motivation**.

Witnessing to other people about the goodness of God to me is a natural outgrowth of love I cherish in my heart. It doesn’t cause me burden, anxiety, or guilt to talk about my love for my wife Raina. It is a natural outgrowth of my love for her. In the same way witnessing to Christ is an issue of His being cherished in my heart.

Look, we aren't called to have a passion for the **Souls** of people. We are called to have a passion for **Jesus** and to deeply **Love People**. Our role is two merely introduce two of our friends to each other.

It is a wonderful thing to get training on how to lead someone to Christ, and to read books that stimulate us to witness to others. But feeling guilt or anxiety about this issue isn't God's working!

Witnessing to others is simply speaking from the **Abundance** of what we each cherish in our **Hearts**. Peter made it really simple for us in II Peter 3:15 *"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

Paul adds a wonderful word about the constraint of our hearts, our motivation, in II Corinthians 5:14, 15 *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."*

I. Children of God Who have Faith in the Midst of the Darkness:

Verses 14, 15 *"Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."*

Paul begins this word to the church at Philippi with some really practical advice we would all do well to hear. In essence he says, **Watch your Words and Guard your Tone**. As you go about living in your world, don't complain or argue, the words from the Greek N. T. language are, "don't express any secret and sullen discontent; don't get involved in murmuring."

These must be avoided at all costs, in the person's life that is seeking to walk as a disciple of Christ. Expressing secret and sullen discontent of the heart by complaining show others we have a lack of faith in what God intends to do, in God's care for our lives!

People who do not yet know Christ are watching very carefully, the people who say they do know Him. They want to know if salvation by faith is real stuff that changes a person's perspective or merely hypocritical lip service.

Paul's point should be crystal clear. Get your eyes off of your present **Circumstances** and on your **Christ**. He will grant you the faith and the power to trust the Father, in deep reverent love and holy fear. Jesus knows what it is like to trust the Father in the hard places. That is exactly what He did when He put His eyes of God's plans and purposes and went to the cross for us.

His was not a melancholic heart of doom and gloom as He went through this for us! Hebrews 12:2 *"Who for the joy set before him endured the cross despising its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Our job is to reflect the attitude and the actions of Jesus Christ our Lord because He does in fact live in us by His Spirit. Here's why. Notice with me where we are called to "*work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*" We are called to walk through life with the Lord right in the middle of the darkness of this world, in the midst of a society that has a bent to moral evil.

In a **Crooked** and **Depraved** generation, exhibit your salvation sons and daughters of God. The words describe a society in Paul's day that was crooked, a Greek N. T. word meaning, "willfully bent away from the true form intended." And the word depraved, meaning "sin-sick, immoral to the core, unable to do the right thing, a people to whom right is wrong and wrong is right."

Let's not live under any false pretenses, brothers and sisters. Read your newspaper or news magazines, watch any TV talk show, or listen to the lyrics of secular songs on the radio. The affect of secular society on the way people think today is staggering. The church is bombarded constantly with this message:

***"Sunday is just another common day
The Bible is just another common book
Jesus is just another common good teacher
Religion is just another common task."***

Paul tells us our world is dark, under the dominion of the prince of this dark world. It needs to know and experience the "Light of the World," our King Jesus. **As a church we must demonstrate our differentness to the way culture views morality.** We must "***Live as pure and blameless children in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation.***"

Tying these thoughts together, what He wants us to see is that as we lay down our petty differences and love each other, something powerful happens. As we get along with each other, working together at our common goal and common task, without expressing secret and sullen discontent, we show our depraved world Jesus is alive and well, living in our midst.

Romans 12:1, 2 "*Therefore, I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good pleasing and perfect will.*"

II. Shine Like Stars in the Universe:

Verses 14, 15 "*Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.*"

Paul uses a truly fantastic word picture to show us what our role as a church is as we live in the midst of our world. He counsels us to, "**Shine like Stars in the Universe.**" As you think about that illustration, there are at least two ways I can see the picture he is painting with his words:

First – as we look up at the sky on a clear night were it not for the stars or luminaries, everything would be pitch black. As Christians we can take a lesson from this picture. We should see ourselves as a stark contrast to the darkness all around us, like the stars of the night sky contrast against the darkness of space.

Second – we understand navigators at sea, use the stars at night to steer a ship safely to their next port. The stars serve as a navigational tool to give them a sense of direction so they don't get hopelessly lost at sea. Spirit-directed Christians are like stars in the universe in that we help people find their way to the safe harbor of knowing the grace and mercy of God through the finished work of His Son Jesus on the cross.

As alluded to earlier in the message, listen to the Words of Jesus about what “YOU ARE!” In Matthew 5:13 – 16 we read, “***You are the salt of the earth.*** *But if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.* ***You are the light of the world.*** *A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Notice what He says. You are salt of the earth, light to the world, a city on a hill. You are mine and I am at work in your character changing you by my Spirit. Our Master's command is to let our light shine to everyone. I am sure this command from His teaching coincides with Paul's word to us here: Live **Radiant** lives reflecting His light to everyone in your sphere of influence!

Psalm 34:4 – 7 *“I sought the Lord and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”*

III. Hold Out the Word of Life:

Verses 15b and 16 *“Shine like stars in the universe, as you hold out the Word of life – in order that I may boast in the day of Christ that I did not labor for nothing.”*

We need to understand a deeper truth of spiritual things, which Paul understood and was seeking to communicate. People do not truly live until we find eternal life through receiving and believing the established Word of God. This is what you and I have had the privilege of becoming partakers in because we have trusted Christ Jesus for salvation, and it is what we have been entrusted with communicating to others.

Jesus said, John 6:63 *“The flesh counts for nothing. The Spirit gives life. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*

James adds in James 1:18 *“He chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created.”*

It is important that we remember there is a progression that happens in our lives regarding embracing the Word of God. It isn't just a matter of reading and obeying. It is a bit more involved in this process.

First, we **Hear the Word of God**, and the climate of our hearts with which we hear is crucial. We secondly, choose to **Receive the Word**, then we learn to **Believe that it really is the Word of God to us**. Finally we **Do what it says**, put it into practice in our lives.

This is what it means to hold it in **Open Display** to others. This is the process we must hold in view and guard carefully, for those to whom we witness, to whom we hold it out.

What we need to see, as His sons and daughters, is that it is really hard to believe what no one is holding out in open display. Paul says we *“shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the Word of life.”* We hold the word of God out to others in open display, when we choose to live like it is true, when it permeates the fabric of our being. We hold it out to people when it is a part of our lifestyle, when our everyday decisions we make on the job or at home hold up its principles.

All too often in the church in North America we find ways to get around parts of the Scripture we don't see in our experiences. We conclude that those things only happened back then, or find elaborate explanations to spiritualize the teachings.

Our job is to approach the Scriptures as they really are, as the written Word of God, for us. It is a record of the children of God experiencing the power of God to shape their lives and change their spheres of influence, with the power of God for our salvation, the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Our part is to appropriate the Word by faith, to pray out in believing prayer, what God says He will do. His part is to verify His Word.

As we choose to do this we hold out to others the living Word of God, and they get to see it, hear it, learn to receive it, believe it and ultimately it becomes a part of them over time. This process is witnessing to His goodness according to His Holy Word!

Paul wrote to the Roman believers: 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.’”*

When we choose to tell someone we love deeply our story, what Jesus has done in our hearts, His work of cleansing us, His Spirit coming to live in us, when that story is validated by a life that is changing, being transformed by His Spirit living in us, the Gospel is held out for someone else to See and Read!

Conclusion:

January 28, 2018 AM

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM:

4. "Living Together as a Church Full of Stars"

Philippians 2:14 – 18

Introduction:

Our topic for the first part of 2018 is "Friendship Evangelism," a term meaning to care deeply about the spiritual lives of people we love.

The Biblical call to **M**_____ **D**_____ is the main reason why we are on planet earth. Jesus made it clear that He came to earth to destroy the devil's work in the lives of people! I John 3:8b and Hebrews 2:14, 15

Right before Jesus went back to heaven He left His followers specific **M**_____ **O**_____ : Matthew 28:18 – 20, Acts 1:8

When we become His children remarkable things happen as the Holy Spirit works in us to change us in two regards: 1. We **E**_____ His **N**_____. 2. We **G**_____ in His **L**_____.

Each one of us has been given a **S**_____ of **I**_____ by the Lord Jesus! Matthew 5:13 – 16 is a picture of salt, light, and a city on a hill.

Paul wrote an incredible passage to the Philippian church about sharing the Word of truth with others, Philippians 2:14 – 16a. This is a powerful text about our role of **W**_____ to others.

The goal of this series of messages is to remove the stereotypes we might have in our minds, to take the **B**_____ out of loving others and telling them our story, to remove the **G**_____ **M**_____!

We are not called to have a passion for **S**_____. We are called to have a passion for Jesus and to **L**_____ **P**_____. Witnessing to others is to flow out of the **A**_____ of what we **C**_____ in our hearts. I Peter 3:15 and II Corinthians 5:14, 15

I. Children of God – Faith in the Midst of Darkness: Philippians 2:14, 15

Paul begins with a word of practical advice. **W**_____ your **W**_____ and **G**_____ your **T**_____.

Paul's point should be clear but we'll state it openly: Get your eyes off of your **C**_____ and get your eyes on your **C**_____. Jesus knows what it is like to trust God in hard, dark places! Hebrews 12:2

We are called to reflect the A _____ and the A _____ of Jesus because He lives in our hearts. We live in the midst of a “C _____ and D _____ generation!”

When we lay down our petty differences and deeply love each other as a local church, something wonderful happens! Romans 12:1, 2

II. Shine Like Stars in the Universe: Philippians 2:15, 16

Paul counsels his readers to live the truth boldly, to S _____ like S _____ in the U _____! Shine in two regards:

- a.
- b.

Jesus told us we are called to have a powerful influential role in our spheres of influence. Matthew 5:13 – 16. This is what you are! You are salt, light, and a city on a hill! You are mine and I am working in each one of you to change your nature ...

As the Holy Spirit lives in us we are called to make Jesus known. Lives R _____ lives reflecting His light to everyone in your sphere of influence! Psalm 34:4 – 7

III. Hold out the Word of Life: Philippians 2:15b, 16

Paul sees and wants us to see the truth about being born of God by His indwelling Holy Spirit. We do not truly live to God until we find eternal life through believing and receiving His Living Word of God in our hearts!

John 6:63 and James 1:18

Paul want his readers to know being born again by the living Word of God is not merely a matter of reading it and obeying it! There is a bit more to this life by His Word made alive to us.

First we H _____ the Word of God and the climate of our hearts when we hear it is crucial. Then we R _____ the Word in our hearts. Then we choose to B _____ it is the Word of God to us personally. And we D _____ or O _____ what it says. This is what it means to openly display it to others!

Our job is to approach the Scriptures as the living Word of God, a record of the experiences the people of God had as the Holy Spirit invaded them, and that we may have today!

The role we have is to give people the Word, the power of God for their salvation! Romans 1:16, 17

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

- 1. Do you think most Christians really understand the fact that we are all called to make disciples?**

- 2. 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.**

- 3. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that our witnessing to people in our sphere of influence flows out of experiencing His nature and growing in His grace? Why?**

- 4. 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?**

- 5. Why do you think it is important for the followers of Jesus to watch our words and guard our tone as we speak with people in our spheres of influence?**

- 6. Paul tells us to hold out the Word of God in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation. What does that mean? What does that look like in practical ways?**

- 7. What do you think it means to shine like stars in the Universe as we hold out or “radiate” the Word of life in our family, neighborhood, workplace, or class room?**

- 8. The Word of God must be assimilated in our lives, received and believed, and we must be transformed by His Spirit. Why is that so important?**

- 9. Read together aloud Romans 1:16, 17 and discuss your thoughts on how our being willing to tell others our story can point them to the power of the Gospel.**

- 10. As we look at the lives of people are there any that come to mind that are in your life specifically for you to care about their eternal soul? Have you written your story? Are you prepared to share your story with them?**