

Radical Discipleship #4 Radical Evangelism

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We are in a series called Radical Discipleship: every single topic in this series is prefigured by “Radical” because we are talking about things that are extreme, cutting to the root or base of a matter. What are the basics, the essence, of following Jesus and how can we do this in the most extreme way possible?

Luke 9:23: “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” This is pretty darn extreme and radical!

Today, the topic is evangelism: I thought this topic was one of the most impactful things in my life and that I should share concerns about this topic.

Teaser questions:

Where are you in chains?


Who are you chained to?

Today’s thesis: *You are called to demonstrate and present the Gospel in your current circumstances, whatever they are, especially if you don’t like your current circumstances.* I hope you will be fully convinced of this before I finish talking!

A difficulty in our culture: Questions about identity or who we are. We have moved from the idea that our identity is **given** to us to more of a stance that we **choose** our own identities about ourselves: who and what we are. Our culture today says that identities are not received but fabricated; this error leads to darkness, hopelessness, and confusion although it sounds really exciting on the surface.

In contrast, John Foreman, a favorite song writer of mine, says: “We are bruised and broken masterpieces but we did not paint ourselves.” There is an identity in God that is given to us by our creator originally that we make a mess of but nevertheless need to receive; in other words, we didn’t paint ourselves. This is what I’m arguing for today: to take on, put on our identity given to us in Christ, which is not something we fully chose. (Although there is choice and freedom in Christ, we will emphasize the unchosen aspects today.)

God’s creation, his workmanship
child of God - He is our Father
child of promise, heir of God, and
joint heir with Christ
chosen by God - holy, beloved
a stranger in this present, fallen world



For example, some of our true identities are that we are God's creation, workmanship, and masterpiece. We are God's child and He is our Father. We are a child of promise, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. We have all the glory of heaven owed to us as heirs. We are chosen by God, holy beloved, a stranger and foreigner in this present fallen world because of the way the world is. We have a original purpose that comes out of this identity: we are salt on the earth, giving it good flavor and preservation. We are lights, chosen to bear fruit that is good to eat. We are an expression of the life of Christ to the world. We're a temple of God, a member of Christ's body, and a royal priesthood. We are willing slaves of righteousness. I actually pulled all of these from the back cover of an earlier Pilgrim Group manual (which can be found on the website if you look; ask me for help if you cannot find it).

Jesus says in Matthew 5:14-16,

14“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people 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. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

It makes no sense to light a light and put it under a bushel...what is that? It's not supposed to light up your whole house...but it's not meant to be covered over. In the same way, we are supposed to be displayed to the world.

We are called to evangelize: demonstrate and proclaim the gospel.

What is the gospel? We have lost touch as to the meaning of this. The gospel is the good news of Jesus which includes *a lot!* The gospel encompasses his story, message, example, victories, power, etc. etc. It's a lot to display and be who Jesus is. If you are a student-type follower of Jesus, here's a project: figure out the best presentation of the gospel you can come up with. One of my favorites is: “Jesus is Lord.” This is simple but leaves room for plenty of follow-up questions. If you want to know why I like this, talk to me later. But students, come up with your own?

This is a challenge to us as good evangelical christians today: I think we're too preoccupied with evangelism in a way and at the same time, not nearly radical enough in our evangelism. Why is this? We have forgotten what a key component of discipleship is: let's look at its purpose, the great commission's wording from Matthew 28:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** 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, **20** and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Notice from Matthew 28 that we are supposed to make disciples, not converts. We get this wrong: converts are good but this is not the mission given to us by Jesus. Evangelism is necessary but we cannot leave it at that. It's like shooting people with a paintball gun and then driving away and saying “Be blessed!” No, we need to demo the gospel to each other all the time. Evangelism is just the beginning.

The essence of discipleship is “Follow me as I follow Christ.” We are disciples of Jesus: last week we learned to *radically follow* Jesus. As we follow him, we turn to the those behind us and say, “follow me.” This is radical! To do this,

1. I have to be following Jesus
2. I have to be following him well enough to say this to someone else

This is extremely challenging! Do you have the confidence that Paul had when he asked this? What would it take for you to have this confidence?

Eric had a personality quiz last week of different ways to follow Jesus, metaphors that the NT uses to follow Jesus. Evangelism is only the start of a discipleship process that you enact towards other people.

In following up with the kind of follower you are, I want to know what your leader type is. You might be a **commander** (if you are a soldier), a **teacher** (if you are a student), a **coach** (if you are an athlete), a **master of servants** (if you are a servant), or a **ruler** (if you are a citizen). If you are a coach, though, you are never the head coach! Jesus is the GM...you are never higher than you really are. Jesus is always the king as a ruler, etc. Nevertheless, we are to follow Paul's assignment and make disciples of Jesus as they are our disciples.

What would it take to convince you that you DO have the gospel to demonstrate to others? **All of you** have really good things to offer. If you're a soldier, you have a mission and victories and you can point to these victories that Jesus has conquered in you! “Join my mission and fight with me!” If you're a student, you have knowledge to give, things that you need to teach others. Athletes have effective movements and technique: they know how to move correctly, gracefully, efficiently, powerfully: you have a way of following Jesus that you can teach and coach in others. If you're a servant, you have a sense of duty and tasks to fulfill that the household needs. A citizen has rules, a way of life and a community that are valuable and that others need.

Paul again talks to the church in Philippi from a prison in Rome. Here, he wanted to explain his imprisonment to the Philippians in a meaningful way:

Philippians 1: 12-14

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

This is surprising to me in a lot of ways! I met with Adam in high school from my large youth group. We tried to evangelize through the model of fun and exciting activities on Wednesday nights: waterskiing in the parking lot, jumping off the building, cute girls and guys, an attractional model. You were supposed to get people to show up for the fun and then sneak in a gospel presentation at the end. There are parts of this that bother me even today... But Adam told me he didn't think this would work for me because I didn't go to the same local high school as the other youth group attendees. I didn't belong. Adam said this method of evangelism wouldn't work: he saw me as Paul, as someone in chains for the gospel. He said I would have to demo the gospel to people where I was at my school, at lunch or at soccer practice. It wouldn't be through coming to the extreme events. Ever since, I have seen how this applied to me.

Please re-read Phil 1:12-14!

Paul was chained to individual people, palace guards, who rotated through shifts so that every day Paul had a new person to talk with, whether they wanted to or not. Who was chained to who? After a while, everyone knew who Paul was and why he was there: he talked with them about the gospel and they got to know him and ultimately Jesus. They saw what Paul did in prison; why couldn't they do it outside of prison?

Phil 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

So I am taking poetic liberties below; I hope it doesn't make you too nervous!

Paul as Example

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Paul, who, being an anointed messenger of Jesus Christ, did not consider his status something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a citizen, being subject to the rule of the Roman Empire. And being found in appearance as a criminal, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to imprisonment—even chains!

What is it for you? Do you want to do a mad lib? Remember those?

You as Example

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as _____, who, being a _____ of Jesus Christ, did not consider his status something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a _____, being _____. And being found in appearance as a _____, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to _____—even _____!

Example:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Michael, who, being a very important pastor of Jesus Christ, did not consider his status something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a student, being enrolled at York School in Monterrey, CA. And being found in appearance as an ordinary nerd, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the calling of Jesus, even being made fun of.

I don't know: fill in the blanks for you.

You are called to demonstrate and present the Gospel in your current circumstances, especially if you don't like your current circumstances. This really fits well with our values at the Village: truth of the gospel, we put ourselves under disciplines: prayer, fasting, reading scripture, eating together, celebrating, many ways to seek to encounter Jesus and be like Him, we gather in community, we practice creativity (upcoming art night!), but the two I want to highlight this morning are AUTHENTICITY: we are who we are without hiding from others. If we are in Christ, we should display this light and not hide it, and ACCESSIBILITY: we need to make the Gospel accessible and available to others. We need to be ourselves as we become like Christ.

Why don't we do this? Eric asked "What we are avoiding?" I want to ask "WHY we are avoiding?" The usual culprits are fear, shame, and anger: Afraid of what might happen to us if we were known as Christians. There are many reasons people don't like Christians today! Or you're ashamed because accepting the name of Jesus would lead you to a lesser status, or maybe you're angry: if you're in chains, there is some kind of adjustment required. You can focus on the injustice done to you and this will lead you down a dark path. Paul flips his imprisonment to an opportunity.

I find encouragement in **Rom 1:16:**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Questions:

Where are you in chains?

Who are you chained to?

Possible chains: maybe it's your work as there are many things not up to you. You're chained to your bosses, your co-workers, your customers, your clients. You are imprisoned. If you go to school, you are chained to classmates and teachers, security guards, secretaries and principals and people who have authority over you. This is an opportunity to present the gospel! If you are at home, you have children or parents, siblings, spouses, roommates, housemates, and neighbors. Some of these you have a choice, many of which you don't. Will you present the gospel here?

Covid happened and we couldn't go to work or hang out with friends as we usually did. We decided to a front porch. We found out that everyone else was also chained at home and so many people would wave at us and we would have talks as we called across the yard. All of the sudden, there was an opportunity to demonstrate the Gospel! Out of this came the monastic front porch communities where we sought to demonstrate the gospel to our neighbors. The Front Porch Prayer came out of this: you can pick up a laminated copy.

Since you are chained to your neighborhood and your neighbors, you should demonstrate and present the gospel. Take home this prayer and gather some believers once a month to pray this prayer. This is a good place to start!

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Who are you chained to?

Questions/Responses:

Peter: At age 21, I shouldn't have a lot of disciples! Jesus made this commission to those who had spent three years intimately with him. I think people should be a disciple first and find people who embody Christ and chain yourself to them.

-Response: my friend Adam was younger than you when he said that to me. Think about what impact even an older high schooler can have on a younger high schooler. But yes: I want people to coach who have it down and know the technique.

David: When I hear the Great Commission, I am overwhelmed at going to all nations. I'm wondering how we as a community are presenting the gospel; how do I think of what you're saying from a community perspective? If we think too much as a community, we may opt out.

-Response: while Paul was chained, his options are limited. If you're chained, you can only demonstrate to the people you are chained to. But you can think of "all nations" as people groups, ethnicities, people groups: All kinds of people.

Jim: Jesus said GO to the utmost parts of the world. If we follow Paul, we will want to bring the gospel to where it hasn't been brought. It might just be two blocks away. I liked the way you tied discipleship to evangelism. They equal each other. For Peter's question above, you could be an assistant coach and then bring them to the coach. But discipleship begins before evangelism. You are discipling people from the first moment you meet them.