

**“Be Missional! Together.”**  
**1 Corinthians 9:19-27**  
**June 10, 2012**

Intro: Matthew 4:18-20... Let your mind run back 2,000 years and picture Jesus walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He spots Peter and his brother Andrew, and says, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Peter: “Jesus, we are fishermen, that’s for sure, but what’s this talk of fishing for people” “Well, you see, I’m calling you to follow me, to learn and walk in my ways, and your job will be to call others to learn and follow my ways.”

Can you imagine after Jesus was raised and ascended to the Father, the disciples who had just received this crystal clear command to make disciples, be his witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit, and catch people out of their own ways into the ways of God, can you imagine if they would have sit on their hands and the church would have fizzled out as quickly as it was birthed? How could something like that happen?

Well, what if they rattled off a list of excuses like the ones we’re prone to offering today? “It’s important and all, but I’m just so busy.” “I would love to see people accept Christ like I have, but I’m not very good about talking about my faith.” “I would share my story with that co-worker, but I don’t want to rock the boat and make things awkward.” “I don’t have all the answers.” “I don’t even have non-Christians friends. Who am I supposed to talk to about Jesus?”

We have these freak out moments when the realization hits that Jesus has told us *all of us* to “make disciples.” And we turn around and say, “You talking to me?” but, but, but, but... I hope we will see today that . . .

**The Point: God calls all of us to share the gospel with relevance to all people.**

I want to give you four principles that will help you grow in sharing the gospel with those around you. Here’s the first.

**I. Missional disciples advance the gospel with the heart of a servant (9:19)**

**Verse 19**

- Paul first says that he is a “servant of all.” (even though he didn’t charge for his preaching like other orators)
- If we are going to advance the gospel it must come through having a servant’s heart.
- Put others before yourself. Have a true concern for their welfare of your neighbors, friends, and co-workers.
- Be willing to put their needs, physical and spiritual, above your own agenda.
- Listen, and please do not miss this: the message is not come to me, be like me, serve me, but I will come to you, I will take time out of my busy schedule to hang with you, I will learn to be like you, I will serve you.
- As we will see, Paul was about getting into the other person’s culture in order to reach them with the gospel.
- If we want to be a church for our community, and we do!, then we are going to have to go to where the community hangs, plays, works, and lives. We have to go to where they are, and identify with them where they are... Paul did not expect people to orient themselves to him.
- We must never assume that people outside of Christ will come to us!
- We make the first move toward them. People are skeptical of the church in general. Many people either directly or indirectly have had horrible experiences with the church. Added to that, people in Medford are skeptical of anything new? People in Medford are old school. They don’t necessarily welcome change. So we must go to them!
- The greatest motivator for our efforts to reach people with the gospel is the gospel itself. The Son of God, came to us and Philippians 2 tells us that he became a servant, he became like us in order that he might relate to us and save us. Now, Jesus calls us to imitate him by going to where people are with that same attitude of a servant, putting others’ interest above our own.
- Does your schedule reflect a love for the lost? Do you display any level of sacrificial service that others might hear of the good news of Jesus Christ?
- I know you’re busy. I know you have a lot on your plate. Can I just tell you that if you make a commitment to serve people with the gospel, it will be one commitment that you will never regret? I have never shared the gospel with someone and walked away with regret. I have never told someone of God’s great love for them, and walked away and said, “You idiot! What were you thinking trying to give that person hope, and grace, and a purpose in life?”

- If we are going to excel in being missional disciples and missional Community Groups, we must take the posture of a servant and meet people where they are. It will take work, but it is worth it. That's what we're after, but how should we go about it? Look at verse 20.

## II. Missional disciples advance the gospel through relevant interaction with all people (9:20-23)

**Verses 20-22.** Paul builds on what it means to be a servant (v.19) and summarizes his approach in v.22 with the phrase "I have become all things to all people."

- Paul loved all people! The most missional Christians are those who can mix it up with a variety of groups of people.
- As Paul engaged these different groups of people, he made sure his lifestyle was flexible enough to befriend all people while not compromising the gospel or his commitment to Christ.

### He mentions four groups...

1. Jews: wait Paul, aren't you a Jew? Completely new identity in Christ, so much so that he related to his own people in a different way.
2. Under the law: "Gentiles (people who were not ethnic Jews, but still) accept the law of Judaism" Religious people, who really do not grasp the true gospel. This is a fairly religious culture. At least people would identify with some form of Christianity culturally. There are many like this in our city, Catholics & Protestants.
3. Outside of the law: Gentiles apart from any Jewish influence. No religious or church background, no exposure to the truths of the Bible. For most people in the church, these people are the most difficult to reach out to and befriend.
4. The weak: most likely Christians with weak consciences. A win here would be seeing someone progress toward greater maturity in Christ.

Paul understood how these groups of people thought, what they valued, and knew their cultural preferences. Therefore, where he could bend without distorting the gospel, he did so gladly that he might have opportunity to share the gospel with all people.

- What did that look like? Well, in 1 Corinthians Paul speaks a lot of eating or abstaining from eating meat sacrificed to idols. Among the Jews, and those under the law, and the weak, he would abstain, but to those outside of the law, he could eat the meat with a clear conscience because as he says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." He was adaptable and flexible when it came to observing special days in Judaism, the practice of circumcision, and other cultural norms.
- Paul was flexible enough to get into their world, understand their world, communicate in their world, and introduce them to another world they've never seen.
- Missiologists call this contextualization: presenting the gospel in a way that is understandable to different groups of people.
- Learn to speak the language of those around you. Learn how they act: (When I see my boy Gio at the Club, I'm going to go up and give the guy the man/playa hug; When I meet an older business man, I'm going to look him in the eye and shake his hand.) Two different subcultures.
- Listen, the gospel message is unchanging (closed hand). Our methodologies for how we package and communicate the unchanging gospel are constantly changing (open hand).
- "The goal of contextualization is to be culturally relevant and faithful to God's Word." (Sills)

**Pic:** Has anyone ever visited a McDonald's in Malaysia? They do things a little differently there. For starters, the girls behind the counter wear paper hats, rather than the classic MickeyDs visors. Secondly, they do not call their hamburgers, hamburgers. Instead they call them beefburgers. Why? Because they are not trying to offend and lose the business of 98% of the Muslim population. They deliver the same goods but in a different way. Pic: McDonalds in Malaysia. (Sills, 210)

- And we learn from Paul that we too must be adaptable and flexible, but notice, Paul was not infinitely adaptable. He doesn't say, "To the wicked, I became wicked. To the thief, I became a thief."

### Christians And Culture

- **Christians *against* the culture**
- **Christians *of* the culture**
- **Christians *in* the culture:** This takes wisdom. This takes being sensitive to the Spirit's leadership in our life.

**Craig Blomberg writes:** “It is of course far easier and requires far less thought to adopt one of these options consistently—either pure separatism or pure indulgence. But neither of these courses of action is in the gospel’s best interests.”

- It takes work. It’s easier to “dump the gospel” on someone and run! Invest time. Live among them. Dwell.
- Identify with their hopes, challenges, burdens, their struggles, their joys, and what may be holding them back from the gospel.
- The gospel never changes, but how we package it constantly changes from one neighborhood to the next and one conversation to the next.
  - For someone who is depressed and dejected, they need to be introduced to the hope of the gospel, and how Jesus will redeem all the effects of this fallen world including their own sin if they would but turn to him.
  - For someone who is highly skeptical, we may need to patiently answer questions, hear their doubts, explore their questions, and present the gospel patiently.
  - For someone who has been burned by the church, we may need to highlight how Jesus often had his harshest words for the religious leaders and institutions of his day, and how they can still experience the real thing in spite of their horrible experience.
  - For people who have tried everything the world has offered them and still remain unsatisfied, we can walk them through the Book of Ecclesiastes and then show them how Christ is the satisfying treasure their heart aches for.

Now, what is Paul’s goal in all of this? Win/Save = why is this so important to Paul?

- The goal is salvation! Paul uses the word “win” five times in the first few verses, and then in verse 22, he says, “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” The eternal destiny of people is at stake.
- But did you notice what Paul says, “that I might save some.” In other words, Paul understood that many people would reject the message and persist in their rejection of God.
- Now, let me be clear, Paul is emphasizing his role and responsibility here (I might win. I might save, but Paul does not save. He just the instrument God is working through. As he said in 1 Cor. 3, “God gives the growth.”

When it comes to our methodologies, Paul’s example here teaches us the value of what some people call “friendship evangelism.” In other words, it’s going to take more than prepackaged approaches to sharing our faith. (In college...) We like to call it evangelistic networking. Reaching out to people in our relational networks with gospel intentionality, sharing that the gospel is both existentially satisfying and intellectually credible.

- Now, when we are contextually on point, and share the gospel faithfully, we have the opportunity to share in the victories of the gospel. **Verse 23.**
- When Paul says, “I do it all for the sake of the gospel” he is primarily referring not to the content of the gospel, but the declaration of the gospel. He possessed a singular passion to see the gospel spread to all people.
- We might expect him to say, that they may share with me in its blessings... but Paul emphasize the joy that is found in coming alongside someone who experiences the joys of knowing Christ. The emphasis is on the joy of the new believer and getting to experience that.

### **III. Missional disciples live with a singular passion to see the gospel advance (9:24-27).**

- **Read vv.24-27.** Paul knew that the way to share in its blessings was to persevere to the end and work hard that people might hear and be saved, and that Paul might finish his race well.

How we go about living a missional life? With everything we are..There’s no holding back. “RUN!!!”

- Are you running hard? Are you asking God to change you, to give you a heart of compassion for those around you, to grant you boldness to declare his word to others?
- Here’s the danger. We can say we’re about the mission of God. We can say, we exist to help those who are far from God find saving faith in Christ, but if we are not praying, meeting people where they are, and engaging with them humility and love, always ready to weave the gospel into everyday conversation.
- We see in v. 25 that Paul speaks with the intensity of a world-class athlete. The Olympics will be in London this summer. Those Olympians are putting every ounce of energy and effort into preparing to win the race. They are, as Paul says, “exercising self-control,” “disciplining their body.” Paul disciplined himself to live an effective Christian life.
- Paul gives a graphic picture: ancient boxers wrapped leather around their knuckles and punished one another with devastating blows. So Paul says, “I beat my body...”

- Does this come close to describing your Christian life. Can you say with Paul, “I do all things for the sake of the gospel.” What does that look like? It’s a rigorous application of what we talk about all the time: Praying, displaying, declaring...
- **Disciplined & Intentional Prayer:** The necessity of frontline prayer!
- **Disciplined & Intentional Living:** Paul not only preached the gospel; he also lived the gospel. And the two were always working together. Holiness is key to mission.
- I love 2 Timothy 2:20-21: **“Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:20-21)**
- **Disciplined & Intentional Witness:** You can look at our church calendar and catch a key part of our missional philosophy at RHC. We try to keep our church schedule (programs, events, etc) fairly minimalistic. Why? So that you will have more time to live like a missionary right where you are.
- If today’s text does nothing else, hopefully it will compel you to work towards friendships with non-Christians.

### Seven Ways to Live Missionally

- **Eat Wisely:** Grab a meal with non-Christians. Everyone has to eat! You heard me? Share a lunch with a co-worker (Rather than reading the paper, surfing the web, just having some me time...)
- **Hobby Well**
- **Be a regular.** Visit the same park grocery, gas station, restaurant, coffee shop, etc..
- **Participate in the Community.** (Go to community events. Take a class in the community.
- **Volunteer** (Local Partnerships. Coach a little league team)
- **Be resourceful:** (invite cards (always have them on you! Bring Sunday!) We have RESOURCES IN THE BACK.
- **Be intentional:** Challenge: Each week, write down one to five friends who need Christ. Commit to praying for them intentionally, and find ways to interact with them, always looking for natural opportunities to share how Christ has changed your life, and how he can change their life.
  - Pray for these people in your community Group.
- I thought this series was about CGs. It is. Philosophically, this is what we are after. Growth, Mutual Care, and Mission. Gospel. Community. Mission.
- You could substitute disciple with the words Community Group. Ubuntu! “I am what I am because of who we all are.”

As you go!!! **Jonathan Dodson says: “Don’t make the mistake of making “missional” another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional.”**

Can I make an obvious observation? Paul wants to win as many as possible! Do you? Yes, I want you to win as many as possible. I want him, I want her, Paul, dude go for it. Pastor, go for it. Missionaries, go for it! I’m cheering you on. Ho,ho,ho,hold up. Do you want to see people come to understand what it means to follow Jesus and embrace him with their lives? Do you want the gospel to advance in this city? In your neighborhood? In your workplace?

### Conclusion:

- Do not underestimate the power of the gospel. Romans 1:16
- People say, “Yes, I’m in with Jesus.” Repentance & Faith. Following him (baptism) We want to see people baptized, which is those new followers identifying with Christ publically...
- Is that you today? We have people in our services every week who have. RHC is a place to come and explore, ask questions, doubt, and then doubt your doubts...