

### ‘Salvation Isn’t Meant To Be A Secret!’

There was a man who had been unemployed for many years had a job interview. His friend asked him, how he got on at the interview, and he said, ‘well, they said they were looking for someone who can be trusted with company secrets.’ His friend said, ‘that was an unusual requirement for a job, what did you say’, and the man said, ‘I told them it’s easy for me to keep a secret because nobody ever listens to me!’

I guess we can all relate to that story when it comes to sharing the Gospel with others. We get those who will listen to us but we also get those who don’t.

After travelling through Macedonia and Greece, and after raising Eutychus from the dead at Troas. The apostle Paul calls for the Ephesian elders to come to him at Miletus and he tells them, **Acts 20:20** ‘You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you.’ Later in **Acts 20:27**, he tells them, he hasn’t ‘hesitated to proclaim to them the whole will of God’ in order that they be obedient disciples of Jesus.

The man who once persecuted the church has now become one of the leading men within the church. **1 Timothy 1:12-14** ‘I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.’

The reason why Paul couldn’t keep his salvation a secret is simply because he never forgot where he came from and what God did for him personally. And I believe that one of the reasons why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because ‘they’ve forgotten where they’ve come from and what God has done for them’.

After describing the godly qualities that Christians should have in their lives, Peter goes on to say in **2 Peter 1:9** ‘But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.’ Is it possible that some people have been Christians for so long, they’ve forgotten where they’ve come from and what God has done for them?

Maybe they’re not convinced God has forgiven them of their past sins or maybe they haven’t forgiven themselves. Listen loved ones, we’ve all got baggage, and most of us have done detestable things in our lives where the people we’ve hurt won’t forgive us and we struggle to forgive ourselves. But God says in **Psalms 103:12**, ‘as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.’ He says in **Micah 7:19**, He has ‘hurled all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.’

And let me say this, all around that seashore, there are signs which say, ‘no fishing!’ In other words, if He has thrown all our past sins into the depths of the sea, then we shouldn’t go fishing them out again. And so, if you’re a little nervous about sharing the Gospel with others, just remember that God has forgiven you and He wants you to tell others that they too can be forgiven. Or as Paul would say in **Philippians 3:13-14**, ‘Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.’ Paul refused to allow his past to dictate his future and neither should we.

Another reason why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because ‘they’ve made the Gospel too complicated’. If someone was to come up to you and ask, what is the Gospel? What would your answer be? I remember a few years ago in a Bible study, I went around the table and asked those present to explain what the Gospel is.

Some spoke about why Jesus came in the first place; some spoke about how sinful we are and how we need to be saved. Some started in Genesis and went all the way through to the Gospels. But to my amazement, most of the answers were long-winded answers. I was amazed because when the apostle Paul spoke about the Gospel he tells us what the Gospel is in two sentences. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** ‘For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.’

Is it possible we’ve made the Gospel so complicated that we feel the need to expand every little detail of it? Instead of saying, ‘hey, Jesus died for your sins as the Old Testament said He would.’ ‘Jesus was buried for you but raised on the third day for you, as the Old Testament said He would.’

Instead of sharing that simple Gospel message with people, some feel the need to tell people about church doctrine, instrumental music and women's role within the church.

When we go handing out leaflets, one of the leaflets we use is called, 'The Simple Truth'. On the front of the leaflet we simple have this.

He came for YOU

'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.' Luke 19:10

He died for YOU

'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Romans 5:8

He was buried but rose from the dead for YOU

'For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.' Romans 6:5

On the back of the leaflet we simply have this.

#### GOD'S PART

1. The great love of God for man. John 3:16
2. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, as the Saviour. Luke 19:10
3. Sent the Holy Spirit as a guide. John 16:13
4. Gave the Gospel 'Good News' as 'the power' that brings salvation. Romans 1:16
5. Provided atonement by the blood of Christ. Romans 5:9

#### YOUR PART

1. Hear the Gospel. Romans 10:17 / John 8:32
2. Believe the Gospel. Hebrews 11:6 / John 20:31
3. Repent of past sins. Luke 13:3 / Acts 17:30
4. Confess faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:10 / Matthew 10:32
5. Be Baptised 'full immersion'. Galatians 3:27 / Mark 16:16 / Acts 2:38

God has done HIS PART; will YOU do YOUR PART?

Now I'm not going to pretend that we've had a huge response from using these leaflets, but we know that we're giving people the chance to not only read the Gospel but also to respond to it. The point I'm trying to make is that if we keep the Gospel message as simple as Paul wrote it, then people would have more confidence in sharing it with others.

Another reason why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because 'they've focused so much on the church, they forgotten about the Christ'. I remember a few years ago, Funmi and I attended a so called 'Gospel Meeting' where there were two speakers. The meeting place was packed and there were several visitors from other faiths in attendance.

The first speaker got up and did nothing but slam other religions and was basically saying that 'the church of Christ are the only ones who are going to heaven!' After hearing his sermon I wanted to leave, I felt embarrassed as these poor visitors were being spiritually attacked and it wasn't surprising that some of them left. But Funmi convinced me to stay to listen to the next speaker who was from America.

And do you know what he spoke about? He spoke about Jesus and having the proper relationship with Him. He preached the only ones going to heaven are those who are 'in Christ'. Do you see the difference? His approach was gentler and kinder, he wasn't lifting up the church, he was lifting up Christ. You see, it's got to the point, where some churches use a capital 'C' in the word Church and some people use a small case 'c' for the word church. And so to play it safe, just in case they offend someone, other churches just write the words, 'CHURCH OF CHRIST' in capitals.

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that 'we preach Christ crucified.' The point I'm trying to make is simply this, when we're sharing the Gospel with others, our focus shouldn't be on the church but Christ.

It's not a matter of inviting people to church but inviting them into a relationship with Jesus. When we offer people a Bible study, we're not inviting them to learn 'our' doctrine, we've inviting them into the heart of God. We're inviting them to get to know God through His Word and learn how much God loves them.

In other words, the sooner we understand that the church can't save anyone, the sooner we'll start preaching about the One who can. Yes 'church' is important, but sharing the Gospel with others, means we're sharing what Christ has done for them and us. Let me share with you something that I personally found interesting.

A couple of years ago, I built a website called, [the-scriptures.co.uk](http://the-scriptures.co.uk), and on the front page, I put the contact as 'Liverpool church of Christ'. Now for the first year the site was averaging around 500 visitors per month. But as an experiment, I removed the sentence 'Liverpool church of Christ', and [guess what happened?](#) The website now averages around 3000 visitors per month, and I get people from all around the world and from different faiths requesting Bible Correspondence courses.

Now you can read into that whatever you like, but the whole purpose of the site is to encourage people to study the Bible. It doesn't matter where they come from or what they believe, if they can draw closer to God and build their relationship with Him through study, then the site is doing what it was built to do.

Another reason why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because 'they've forgotten the joy it brought them'. I remember when I first became a Christian, someone said to me, 'you look so happy, have you won the lottery?' [Do you remember when you first became a Christian? Remember the load of sin which was removed from your shoulders when your sins were forgiven? Remember the joy you felt when you were saved?](#)

[Didn't you want to do what the man who lost one sheep did when he finds it later? Luke 15:6 'Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' Didn't you want to do what the women who lost one of her silvers coins did when she finds it later? Luke 15:9 'And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'](#)

When we remember what our salvation felt like and the joy it brings, we just can't help but want to share that joy with our friends and neighbours. The joy of being saved isn't a one off experience, it's a continual joy which prompts us to share it with others, so they too can receive the same experience in being saved.

Another reason why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because 'they've created too many hoops for people to jump through.' I remember a few years ago sitting in a Bible study and the person leading the lesson asked the question, [how much does a person need to know before they are baptised?](#)

Well again, there was a great deal of emphasis on people needing to understand church doctrine, how and why we worship the way we do, etc. I listened for a while and told them what I understood before I became a Christian and they weren't happy. I told them I didn't fully understand what the church was all about, I didn't fully understand about the gift of the Holy Spirit. But I did understand that I believed in the Christ and what He did for me, I understood that I was a sinner and needed to be forgiven. And the only way I was going to receive God's forgiveness was in the waters of baptism.

[Do you know what they told me?](#) They told me I wasn't a real Christian and I needed to be baptised again because I didn't fully understand everything else what the church believed. Jesus says in [Mark 16:16 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'](#) Loved ones, there's all the requirements Jesus asked for.

And it's simply to believe in the Gospel, to believe that He is the Christ, that He died for you, was buried for you and was raised from the dead for you. You see, when we meet people who want to become Christians, there are some who want to make sure they are fit to become Christians in the first place. [It's good that you believe, but, have you ever been associated with another church? Have you been married before? Have you ever been divorced?](#)

And Jesus looks down and asks, [what are you doing? Why are you acting like the church police? Who gives you the authority to set the requirements as to who can enter My kingdom or not?](#) Now don't get me wrong, I understand that it's good to teach about the cost involved in becoming a Christian before a person is baptised.

But Jesus says if a person has heard the Gospel and believes the Gospel, they will be moved to openly confess to others that He is the Christ. They will be moved to repentance, and they will be moved to be baptised because they understand that's what they need to do to be saved.

Notice what Jesus said in **Matthew 28:19-20** '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.' He says go, make disciples by teaching the Gospel, baptise them and then teach them everything else they need to know. If we want to share the Gospel with others, then we need to remove all the hoops which Jesus never put in place.

Another reason why some Christians hesitate to share the Gospel with others is possibly because 'they're ashamed of being a Christian or don't trust in the power of the Gospel'. **Romans 1:16** 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel.' Many Christians don't want to share the Gospel because they are ashamed of the Gospel, they're afraid they might get ridiculed or persecuted.

Now I can understand that if we were living in a country where Christianity is banned and they have to meet in secret. But let's be honest, the only ridicule or persecution we're liable to face here in the UK is verbal abuse. Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:12** 'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.' If Christians haven't been ridiculed or persecuted by anyone, then that leads me to believe that they haven't shared the Gospel with anyone. We should never be frightened to tell people what Jesus did for us and how He can do the same for them.

**Romans 1:16** 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.' You see, the Gospel message is powerful enough to convert anyone. There are times when we rely too much on our own knowledge and intellect when we're speaking to people about the Gospel. And as a preacher I sometimes forget that it's not what I say that's going to convince someone to become a Christian, the power is found in God's Word.

When we share the Scriptures with people we often feel obliged to expand on what is being said and there are times when that is needed. But there are other times when we simply need to allow God's Word to do what only it can do. **Hebrews 4:12** 'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.'

God's Word is so powerful, so alive and active, it can do things which we can't, it can reach the parts of people which we can't reach. God's Word penetrates people deep within and we need to learn to trust God's Word to do the job it was designed to do.

Now those are just a few examples of why some people may hesitate to share the Gospel with others. But in all of this we must remember that we don't make Christians, God does. He's the One who converts people, He's the One who adds people to His church.

I remember just before my parents died; I was really struggling within myself because I hadn't clearly shared the Gospel with them. So one day Funmi and I decided that we would go to them and deliberately go out of our way to share the Gospel with them. Sadly, they never obeyed the Gospel, but we did what we knew we needed to do.

**Mark 16:15** 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.' Notice we're not commanded to preach the church but the Gospel. Our job as Christians is simply to go out into our world, that includes speaking to our family, neighbours and friends. It includes speaking to people in our workplace, speaking to anyone who is a part of our world about Jesus the Christ and what He done for mankind.

Now someone people argue that Jesus is speaking to the apostles here, so this doesn't apply to us. If that's the case then why would Paul command Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:1-2** 'You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.'

You see loved ones; we wonder why our congregations aren't growing as fast as they should. It's because we've forgotten that we all have a responsibility in sharing the Gospel with others. Because for too many years now, it's been left to the preacher to get on with it.

Yes it's good for us to be reminded of the Gospel message but maybe our focus should be on 'how' we share that Gospel message with others. So let me go ahead and share with you some practical ways to share the Gospel with others and it all starts with 'prayer'.

Colossians 4:4-6 'Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.' If any of our outreach plans don't include God, we're setting ourselves up for failure even before we begin.

Notice how specific Paul's prayer is, he wants God to help him make the message clear. He wants God to help him be wise in the way he delivers that message. He wants God to help him look for opportunities to share that message. He wants God to help him be gracious with the message so that he can answer any questions he gets relating to the message.

Last year Funmi and I met a couple of Mormons who asked us if we wanted to study with them and so we agreed we would. They came to our house, and because we never slanted them and never put down their faith, they came once a week, for three months. All we did was love them and gently took them to the Bible to show how the Book of Mormon contradicted many things the Bible says.

They asked us if they could bring someone else to the study with them, and so we agreed that they could bring the 'big guns' with them. The study only lasted another week when he came, but we gave them a printout of all the things they were teaching which contradicted with what the Bible teaches. We made good friends with them and we left it in God's hands, the good news is we got one of the missionaries personal email address, so we'll see what happens in the future. The point is that we followed Paul's example in his prayer and as a result we managed to share the Gospel with them in love.

Now when it comes to sharing the Gospel, we have to choose our own style and approach because we're all different. For example, some of you may be comfortable using 'Peter's confrontational approach'. Peter wasn't a beat around the bush kind of guy, he was a 'get in your face kind of guy,' and he was the perfect choice for Acts 2 to preach at Pentecost. Acts 2:22-23 'Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Therefore, let of Israel be assured of this, God's made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

Peter is a ready, aim, fire, kind of evangelist and there are some people in this world that are never going to take Christ seriously unless somebody gets up in their face and says, 'You better make a decision because you're in trouble.' And maybe that's your style, and if it is, God will open up doors for you to use that kind of style.

Some of you may be more comfortable using 'Paul's intellectual approach.' Some in the kingdom are called to give a reasoned, logical presentation of the Gospel's claim. There was a reason that God selected this schooled, educated, rabbi to be the man that would write most of the New Testament and particularly those great epistles that explain the doctrines of the faith.

You remember for example, Paul going to a place like Athens which was known for her wise men and philosophers. Now I personally believe Paul missed a great opportunity here because if you read the text, he never once mentions Jesus. But nonetheless, he said in Acts 17:23 'As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.'

And if you read the rest of the chapter, you realise that he took on the sceptics. Luke tells us in, Acts 17:32 'at the end of his talks some of them sneered and said that's foolishness' but some of them came back and said, 'this resurrection thing, I want to hear more about that.'

There's always going to be a need in the church for great minds that can take on sceptics in intelligent debate. People who can talk about why we believe in the resurrection, why we believe the Bible is the Word of God, why we believe God exists.

Some of you may be more comfortable using **'Matthew's relational approach.'** Remember that Matthew was a tax collector and sometimes he's called Levi in our Bible. Jesus said, **'come follow me'** and he did and look at what he did. **Luke 5:29 'Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.'**

Now let me tell you what Matthew did, he had some new friends in Christ called disciples of Jesus, Peter, John, those guys, but he also had his old tax collecting mates. So as soon as he followed Christ, **do you know what he did?** He threw a party and he intentionally mixed the two crowds. He said, **'I want all my new mates that follow Christ and I want my old tax collecting mates at my house, I'm going to throw a big party and I'm going to let them mingle.'** Most people know how to throw a party and that may your thing, to have some of your friends who don't know Christ and some of your friends who do know Christ, get them together in your home and let them mix.

Some of you may be more comfortable using **'the Samaritan woman's invitational approach.'** In **John 4** after talking with Jesus, she leaves her water jug and goes back into town. **John 4:29** says, **'And she said to the people in town, Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' And do you know what happened?** A bunch of people from town went, in fact there was so many that Jesus said to His disciples, **'look up, the fields are ripe for harvesting.'** **John 4:35.**

I heard that **25%** of un-churched people in Britain say, they would attend a church service if they were invited to do so. Now they might be just saying that but suppose half of them are telling the truth, let's suppose that **12%** were telling the truth. If all of us were to ask one person a week, and if you do the maths, you can work out how many first-time visitors would be in our assemblies every week! Now that's what some of us can do, we could be that woman that says, **'come see a man, I've met, you've got to check him out, come with me.'**

Some of you may be more comfortable using **'the Dorcas service approach.'** **Acts 9:36** **'In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.'** Dorcas was known all over town because she was a woman of good deeds. And I'm sure as she was going about doing good and helping the poor, she would have shared the Gospel with many people. And remember that when we give a cup of water in Jesus Name, it often opens the way for us to offer them living water.

Some of you may be more comfortable using **'the blind man's testimonial approach.'** Remember in **John 9** the religious rulers began to attack this man who was praising Jesus for healing him saying, **'he couldn't possibly be from God?'** Look at **John 9:25** **'He replied, 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!'** That's a marvellous style of evangelism, to simply say, **'I don't know a lot, but I can tell you for a fact, how my life is different since I've met Jesus.'**

You see, in the New Testament, Jesus is often pictured as being on trial by the world. And imagine Jesus is on trial and the Holy Spirit is Jesus' defence lawyer. Now what the Holy Spirit wants to do is to call witnesses, who can take the stand and say to the court, **'I'm here to tell you what has happened to me since I've met this man.'**

Some of you may be comfortable using your own **'personal testimonies.'** Now I know we often shy away from doing this in the Lord's church, but please don't misunderstand me here. I'm not talking about standing up the front on a Sunday morning sharing your **'testimony'** with the church. I'm talking about being alert for opportunities to give your personal testimony but do it in the style that's consistent with your personality.

Three times in the **Book of Acts**, Paul gives his personal testimony, where he tells people what happened to him because he's met Jesus Christ. And the last time in **Acts 26**, where he's before king Agrippa and he asks Agrippa to make a decision and Agrippa says in **Acts 26:28** **'Paul, you think in such a short time I'm going to become a Christian'**. And Paul answers him and says in **Acts 28:29** **'Short time or long, I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am except for these chains.'**

Paul had a reason for giving his testimony, he would share his testimony because his prayer was that when people heard his testimony they would say, **'what he's got, I want.'** Now your testimony is basically, **how did your story intercept God's redemptive story?** And your testimony needs **three** things. **1. Your former dissatisfaction. 2. How it was that you came to encounter Christ. 3. What are the results?**

Now let me tell you what's holding some of you back, sometimes when we hear testimonies they are rather dramatic, of people that used to live on the streets.

People that used to be harden criminals, people that used to have addictions, and they met Christ and now they are delivered and that's dramatic and were impressed. That's nice and you're thinking, **'I just don't have a dramatic testimony.'** I was raised in the church, I've had a Bible since I was a baby, I've been a Christian since I was a teenager, I've got nothing to share. **Wrong!**

What you have to share, is really what most people need, because most people aren't living on the street or have addictions. Most people have a little dab of religion and what they need to hear is how you moved from religion to a relationship with Jesus Christ, so in fact, you do have a very powerful testimony. It's about how you moved from having some moral principles to an encounter with a living Person whose changing your life. Remember, Christianity isn't just something to believe, it's a person to receive.

Some of you may be more comfortable sharing the Gospel by **'leafleting and handing out leaflets.'** I believe there's a place for leaflet dropping into people's homes, although studies show that this isn't a very effective way of reaching the lost. Saying that, if it does anything, it reminds people of the Gospel message and reminds people that the church is active in the community trying to help and serve the community in any way they can.

Handing out leaflets is a little more effective because at least you get to meet and talk to people face to face about Jesus. Mark Hill gave me an idea last year when it comes to handing out leaflets, and that was to simply ask people, **if they could ask God one question what would it be?** We got the usual questions like, **why is there so much pain and suffering in the world? Why would God send anyone to hell if He's a loving God?** But because we now use this approach, we're speaking to a lot more people.

In all of this, we must remember that we're responsible for sharing that good news with others, but we're not responsible for people's responses. I've personally found that people would rather go online for a study than call us to have a personal study.

But some of you may be more comfortable sharing the Gospel using **'social media'**. One of the quickest and best ways to share the Gospel with millions of people is through a good website. Before I built my website I did a lot of research on what to do and what not to do. And I believe that many of our congregations would benefit if they had good, up to date website which is easy to navigate and read.

I'm not saying my website has ticked all the boxes, and I'm not promoting my website but if you use it and find it useful then that's great. But on it there are a variety of Bible Correspondence Courses, which people have gone through and some are now going through. There are studies in different Books of the Bible, there are deep studies and small group studies, ladies studies, there are answers to some Scripture questions which people have asked.

There are sermons you can read or listen too, there are studies from Jimmy Eaton and Tony Coffey, there are short devotional videos and a variety of Bible studies for all ages of children. I also have a Twitter account which is only used in relation to my website and I have a YouTube channel where I post my videos.

But the reason there is so much material on there is simply to encourage people to get to know God and His Word. I don't expect people to agree with everything I write, but if it encourages people to stop and think about what they believe, then I've achieved my goal.

**Can you imagine how much quicker the Gospel would had spread throughout the world if the apostles had access to things like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube etc?** Let me encourage you to use social media, if that's your way of sharing the Gospel. Let me encourage all of you to get actively involved in sharing the Gospel with others, because our salvation isn't meant to be a secret.

Let me finish by quoting some of the words from **Washington Glass** who is accredited with writing the chorus we now call **'There is a balm in Gilead.'** **'If you cannot sing like angels, if you can't preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, and say He died for all.'**