

## TAKE A STEP

### The Call to be Witnesses

The great German writer Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him."

With Good Friday and Easter coming up, take some time to pray about who you can invite to join you at church. Think about someone who needs Jesus or someone who has been disconnected from God's family. It might be good to pick them up and take them to church. Consider inviting them to go to a restaurant or come to your house for a meal before or after the service. Pray that the Lord will touch them and open their heart to the message during that weekend.

In spending time with them, let God's love fill your heart. Make it a priority to find out about their journey through life, and carefully listen as they express their needs and their interests. Look for ways to share the story of how you met Jesus, as the Holy Spirit leads.

**DAY ONE** - MAR 19

## Understanding the Mission

*I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.*  
Ephesians 3:7

Once Paul's heart was touched by God's grace, He was eager to tell others what Christ had done. The same is true for us. Once you have received God's mercy, you want to share the good news so others can have what you have. Have you ever thought about why God doesn't just take people to heaven as soon as they receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior? If the goal was to take us to heaven, then why aren't Christians instantaneously transported there as soon as we give our lives to Christ? Because the Lord has a work for us to do right here.

You can sing in heaven, pray in heaven, fellowship in heaven, and serve God in heaven. But one thing you can't do in heaven is introduce people to Christ and help them secure their eternal destiny. God wants us to know Him and make Him known throughout the world. And as long as there's one person on earth who doesn't know the gospel message, God says we've got to keep reaching out, because everyone needs Jesus and everyone needs to be a part of His church.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus 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 am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Making disciples involves leading people to Christ and helping them mature in their faith. God cares about us, but He also cares about our friends, neighbors, family members, and co-workers who don't know Jesus. God has given us a mission, to impact lives for Jesus Christ.

Imagine if our church would be known for doing good deeds and acts of kindness in our community. Others may not like our theological beliefs, but what if unbelievers in our community would freely admit "those people are always loving others, just like Jesus did." Imagine if we were known for our powerful prayers, that people would regularly come to our worship services because they've heard that Jesus is here to heal them and set the demonized free.

As Christ followers, there should be a missional element in what we do. We're entrusted with good news and God expects us to share it with others. Therefore, community outreach is not something we do if we have any spare time. We're called by God to be a family of believers who live on mission, regularly building relationships with outsiders to show them the reality of Christ.

**REFLECTION:**

Who are some people in your sphere of influence that need Jesus?

Take some time to ask the Lord to give you a love for others who don't know Christ.

**DAY TWO** - MAR 20

## Offering Prayer Support

*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*

Acts 10:38

Jesus didn't just rent a building and hang out somewhere and say, "If you'll come to me or if you'll show up at my meeting, then I'll minister to you." No, Jesus went after the least, the lost, and the lonely and He wants us to do the same.

John Wimber wrote a book called Power Evangelism, and he said: "...a close inspection of the book of Acts reveals that the disciples went out and spread the good news in the same fashion as Christ: combining proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom of God. The apostles not only taught what they heard, they did what Jesus did." (Power Evangelism, page 88.) Notice those two words, proclamation and demonstration. We need both!

Jesus made it a point to proclaim the good news but He also demonstrated the presence of God's Kingdom by doing good to others. But how does that apply to us?

Every one of us, as we go about our daily business, will run into people with serious needs. Perhaps they need a healing, or maybe there's a death in the family, the loss of a job, severe depression, or a marriage and family problem of some kind. What do we do in those situations? Are we willing to step out in faith and pray for them?

We can either pray for them right there, if the occasion allows for it, or we can pray for them at a later time, and then make it a point to check back with them to see how the situation is progressing. Simply ask them, "How's your job coming?" Or, "Is there any new information about your health?"

Praying for people is a great way to show them that you care and it releases the power of God to work on their behalf. When people encounter the power of God and they receive His healing touch through prayer, it often softens their hearts and makes them more receptive to the gospel. Jesus has sent us into the world as His representatives. Let us freely give the gift of prayer to those in need, trusting the Lord to do great things!

**REFLECTION:**

What would it take for you to be more confident in prayer?

Offer to pray for a pre-Christian person this week and make sure you check back with them to see how they're doing.

**DAY THREE - MAR 21**

## Showing Kindness

*Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus is urging this man to reach out in love to those who can't repay. Our Lord calls us to go and share Christ and His love with those whom society tends to ignore: the powerless, the poor, the mentally ill, the social outcasts, the sick, the imprisoned, the handicapped, the orphaned, the widowed, and the aged. Jesus says, if you'll extend God's love toward those who can't repay, then two things will happen.

- You will be blessed. And the word "blessed" speaks of the joy of experiencing divine favor and being rightly related to God. He's talking about a joy we can experience right now!
- If you do deeds of kindness to those who can't repay, in the future, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

The Bible says that none of us is righteous in and of ourselves, but when we place our faith in Christ, He declares us to be not guilty and He gives us the gift of His righteousness. Also, for a Christ follower, faithful service will be rewarded in the life to come! The essence of living in God's kingdom is taking what God has given to us and looking for ways to share it with others.

The great thing is, you don't have to wait for the church to sponsor an event to do this kind of outreach. You can take baked goods to your neighbors, shovel their snow in the

winter or rake their leaves in the fall. You can offer to watch their kids or help them with a household project. The entire family can participate in these random acts of kindness. And you can also practice kindness at your school or work site, by looking for ways to brighten someone's day.

Romans 2:4 states, Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? It's the kindness of God which leads us to repentance. Did you know that? Not the severity of God, but the kindness of God. Kindness is a powerful way to impact lives for Christ. It helps change people's perception of God, helping them see Him as kind and merciful. But showing kindness toward others also helps to change their perception of what Christians are like, that we're not just takers but givers. Kindness is a powerful way to open up doors to tell others about Jesus Christ.

**REFLECTION:**

In your home, workplace, and neighborhood, who could use a touch of kindness today?

Are you regularly looking for ways to bless others in Jesus' name?

**DAY FOUR** - MAR 22

## Forming Friendships

*Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

*Luke 15:1-2.*

In Jesus' day, the tax collectors were considered immoral and dishonest and “the sinners” were anyone who didn't meet the rigid standards that were set out by the Pharisees. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were upset that Jesus associated with such immoral people.

In that time period, to join in fellowship with people around a table was an act of friendship and it was a sign of mutual acceptance. By eating with these people, Jesus was making a statement that He loved them and that these folks mattered to God. In contrast, the Pharisees prided themselves in avoiding people like that. Jesus welcomed them and received them with gladness.

Studies have shown that a vast majority of people who come to Christ do so through the influence of a friend, relative or acquaintance. Jesus was a friend of sinners and we need to befriend others too. He wants us to build relationship with those who don't yet know the Lord, and, in a very natural way, tell them the gospel message.

How many of you came to Heritage because you were told about it or invited by somebody else? Most of us were brought by a friend or relative. Many of you accepted Christ here and many of you are going to heaven because somebody cared enough to tell you.

God has intentionally put people around you because He cares about them and He wants them to know Him. Each believer should spend some portion of his/her time dedicated to reaching out to unsaved and unchurched people. Is it too much to ask God to enable us to lead one person to Christ within the next few months? Is it too much

to begin right now, as the Spirit leads, to reach out to someone who needs Jesus? Have we forgotten the price Jesus paid for our eternal salvation and His commission to share the good news with others?

We must begin by asking God to place people on our hearts who will respond to the gospel. There are needy people all around us who are dying to hear the message we bring! Let's continue to pray, “God show me a way that I can share the good news with them. Please open their hearts to your Word.” God has a way of softening the hearts of the people you pray for.

God has uniquely positioned us to make an impact for Christ. Praying for others, doing deeds of kindness, and becoming a friend opens up the door for you to share good news of Jesus.

**REFLECTION:**

Who are you praying for that has not yet come to Christ?

Identify 1 or 2 pre-Christian people and take steps to be a good friend.

**DAY FIVE - MAR 23**

## Being Ready to Share Your Story

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

1 Peter 3:15

Peter says, revere or honor Christ as Lord. He is the reason for our hope! We can trust Him and trust in His promises. Christians know that their pain will not continue forever. They can see the ultimate triumph of God over evil, and the reign of Jesus Christ over all the earth. So, when Christians look ahead, they have hope.

When our hope is in the Lord, we're able to walk with a sense of certainty and serenity. No one can take away our joy because we've entrusted ourselves into the hands of one who loves us, and who always has our best interests at heart. When others see the peace and contentment in our lives, they may wonder where it comes from. We need to be ready to give a reason for the hope that we have!

When our Lord went to the cross, Peter denied knowing Jesus. Years later, you get the impression that Peter was determined to never again miss an opportunity to point people to Christ. Peter makes the point that the ability to give answers about the Christian faith is not the job of super saints like apostles, theologians, and missionaries. It's the job of every Christian.

The apostle also makes it clear that how we respond to others makes a huge difference. He says, when you give an explanation, the goal is not to attack someone, or belittle

them, but to treat them with gentleness and respect. Jesus wants us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). A witness just tells what he or she has seen or heard. Everyone has a story, and if Christ has touched your life and you've come to know Him in a personal way, it's important to share what happened with others.

Of course, our words don't mean much if they're not backed up with corresponding action. Read some books like *More than a Carpenter*, and *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, by Josh McDowell, and *The Case for Christ*, and *The Case for Faith*, by Lee Strobel. They will help you become better equipped to answer the questions that skeptics ask.

**REFLECTION:**

If you've never done it before, take some time and write out the story of how you came to know Christ. Use the following points as a guide:

- A** – stands for account. It's important to give an account of your life before you met Christ.
- B** – stands for the word believe. Share what happened that caused you to believe.
- C** – Describe the changes that Christ has made in a very specific way.

**DAY SIX - MAR 24**

## Inviting People to Church Events

*In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.  
Matthew 5:16*

According to Jewish tradition, God is the light of the world. Psalm 27:1 says, The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? But the Jews also saw themselves as the light of the world and they sometimes spoke of the law in the Old Testament as the light the world needed. If you recall, in John 18:12, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. But now, Jesus introduces a brand-new thought. He says to His disciples: “You are the light of the world!” He’s telling them that their role has huge significance.

Light is used throughout the Bible as a symbol for purity and for truth. By making such a claim, Jesus is implying that the world is a dark place with little or no light of its own. Therefore, it desperately needs an external source of light to illuminate it.

When we as Christians are faithful to reach out to others through offering prayer support, demonstrating kindness, and being a friend, there is an extra blessing that’s available when we’re part of a church family. We can invite them to church events! God designed His church to be a place where people are welcomed and loved. The church is meant to be a safe place where people can explore who God is and what it means to be a Christian.

In fact, long before a person ever shows up your church, they’ve already evaluated your church based on the kind of person you are. Do they see your genuineness? Do they see an authenticity in your life? Because if they don’t, why would they ever want what you have? God’s goal is for all of us to use whatever gifts we have, to help people find Christ and follow Him wholeheartedly.

The cool thing is, every one of us can pray, do deeds of kindness, and be a friend. All these things expose people to our individual witness and that is powerful! But we also need to take the next step of exposing them to the corporate witness of the body of Christ. If all that these people have is your individual witness, they can easily say that you’re just “an exception” or “you’re just a little unusual.” When you bring them to church and they see there are a bunch more people like you who love Jesus and who are serious about their faith, it can make a huge impact.

Thank God that we don’t have to be superstar Christians or spiritual giants to impact lives for Christ. We just have to make ourselves available to pray, to be kind, to form friendships, and to invite people to attend church events. The Spirit of God is the one who does the real work of salvation.

**REFLECTION:**

Prayerfully consider: What pre-Christian person can you invite to church this week?