

- ***READ Matthew 28:16-20*** The scene that is described by Matthew here at the end of his Gospel account is quite monumental to behold. Not only do we see the disciples offering worship to Jesus, thus signifying His Lordship and Kingship, but we also see Jesus establishing the mission that was to be accomplished by these men as Apostles and all of Jesus's people as disciples. The mission given by Jesus is quite simple for He desired for His followers to be a people who go out making more disciples as they shared the Gospel, baptized, and taught the people of the nations.
- For nearly two thousand years, this mission has been carried out by disciples of Jesus to the point that there are few places on this planet where the Gospel has not been taught. But how? How is it that disciples have been so excellent in sharing the Word of God that nearly the entire world has had an opportunity to hear? Let me suggest that nothing ground breaking or mind blowing has been taking place. Instead, a very simple game plan has been carried out by disciples for hundreds of years, and it must be a game plan that we continue to carry out if we want to be excellent in fulfilling Jesus's desire for us to be sharing the Word.
- That game plan simply revolves around us being willing to open our eyes, our mouths, and our Bibles. This might seem a bit overly simplistic, but when we boil things down, this really is just how simply it is when it comes to sharing God's Word. This morning, we are going to look at what it means for us to do these things, and then we will look at a number of examples from the book of the Acts of the Apostles that shows that these efforts are the same efforts that were put forth by the Apostles and other disciples in the earliest times of the church.

I. We must open...

A. Our Eyes (Awareness)

1. When I talk about opening our eyes, I am talking about having an awareness for the need of the Gospel in the lives of those around us. All people of sound mind have at some point sinned against God and are in need of the saving grace of Jesus. Each of us know this to be so very true because every disciple that is present this morning has found himself or herself in the same position in the past. Other people need Jesus just as much as we do.
2. Knowing that other people need Jesus, we must be on the lookout for opportunities to share that Good Word with those who are in need. There will be times when we run across people who are looking for a church family. Some people will share with us how their lives are a mess and how they are in need of something to get things turned around. Sometimes a conversation will be shifted to a spiritual direction and we have the opportunity in that moment to speak the truth that is found within God's Word. Sometimes people will straight up ask us if we are Christians because they are looking to learn more. If we are keeping our eyes open then we will recognize other opportunities, and we will have the opportunity to act upon them by opening...

B. Our Mouths (Willingness)

1. Keeping our eyes open for opportunities to share the Word of God is only a part of the game plan because that in and of itself does nothing. Therefore, we must be willing (key word) to take advantage of those opportunities and capitalize on them by opening our mouths and sharing the Word of God in whatever way is helpful in that particular moment.
2. I am fully aware that such an effort is not exactly easy because we recognize the often polarizing nature of the truths that are found within God's Word. The wisdom and desires of God are often at odds with the wisdom and desire of men, and it is sometimes that case that God's Word is rejected and we might even be maligned for having shared it with

those who needed to hear it. Therefore, our willingness must often be accompanied with a healthy dose of courage so that we might share those sometimes uncomfortable truths that are found by opening...

C. Our Bibles (Dependence)

1. We might often be intimidated when it comes to sharing the Word of God because we think of doing such a thing in terms of what we have to do within those moments. After all we are the ones who have to keep our eyes open and we have to be willing to open our mouths. However, we need to recognize that all of the effort on our part will be nothing if we fail to open our Bibles when it comes to what we are actually saying.
2. I am not saying that we must always literally open up the Bible because sometimes that just isn't possible. However, we must be sure that whatever it is that we are saying finds root in God's Word. Our dependence must be upon God's Word and not our own wisdom or desires.

Let me again reiterate that none of this is some grand formula that I thought of one day, but instead I want for us all to realize that this is what we see within the Bible and particularly the book of the Acts of the Apostles. For the remainder of our time, we are going to look at a number of examples from that text that show this as being the consistent pattern by which the Apostles and other disciples operated.

II. Examples In Acts

A. Acts 2:14-41 — Peter On Pentecost

1. On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles are all gathered together when the Holy Spirit comes down upon them. They are enabled to speak in different languages that they had not previously known. There were many Jews in Jerusalem because of Pentecost, and many of them came to the place where this great noise had been heard. They see the Apostles speaking in these languages that they should not have known and think they are drunk. Peter sees the interests within this large multitude.
2. Peter takes advantage of this opportunity by addressing the fact that he and the other Apostles were not drunk, but instead they were simply the manifestation of the fulfillment of what had been prophesied of within God's Word.
3. Joel had written many hundreds of years before concerning the last days when God's Spirit would be poured upon mankind, and Peter confirms that they were seeing the fulfillment of that prophecy. He also speaks to the words of David when he wrote of the coming Messiah whose flesh would not see decay though He be in hades. He also spoke of the Lord having His enemies made as His footstool. All of this Peter says is pointing to Jesus of Nazareth as being the Messiah of God even though these men had put Him to death on a cross.

B. Acts 3:1-26 — Peter & John In Solomon's Colonnade

1. Sometime later, Peter and John are walking up to the temple during the afternoon when they come across a lame man who had been lame since birth. He asks Peter and John for money, but they have none. Instead, they look at the man and give him something so much better...the ability to walk! This lame man now walking, leaping, and praising God causes quite a scene to the point that many people gather around Peter and John at the part of the temple complex that was known as Solomons Colonnade.
2. Peter sees the great crowd that has gathered around, steps forward, and begins to address his fellow Israelites concerning this known lame man that is now able to walk and even leap.

3. He uses this opportunity to impress upon their hearts that Jesus, the man that they had delivered over to Pilate for death, was indeed the Holy and Righteous One of their God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The prophets predicted that Jesus would suffer just as He had suffered, and He did so for their benefit...the forgiveness of sins. He then reaffirms that Jesus had been raised from the dead as Moses had predicted, and through Jesus all of the nations of the earth had been blessed because of what Jesus had accomplished. He had now given them all the ability to be blessed by turning from their evil ways.

C. Acts 6:8-7:53 — Stephen Before The Sanhedrin

1. Stephen was one of the men who had been appointed to the duty of making sure that the Hellenistic Jews were being fed in the daily distribution, but that didn't stop him from allowing the influence of the Holy Spirit to empower him to perform great wonders and signs among the people. He was also able to effectively refute those who stood in opposition to him and the teachings of God he was sharing with those who would listen.
2. There were many who continued to be against him and his work for the Gospel, and they went so far as to bring around false witnesses to accuse him of blaspheming. Stephen was dragged before the Sanhedrin and had the opportunity to speak concerning what he had been teaching.
3. For the better part of a long chapter within Acts, Stephen recounts nearly the entirety of Israel's history in an effort to show those gathered around him that Jesus was the fulfillment of everything that God had been doing through His people, Israel. He addresses Abraham, Joseph and his brothers, Moses, the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the attempts to build a dwelling place for God. He concludes by forcefully stating that these men had following in the rebellious pattern of behavior as their ancestors. *"You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit. As your ancestors did, you do also."*

D. Acts 8:26-40 — Philip & The Ethiopian Eunuch

1. Because of persecution in Jerusalem, many disciples were scattered and they took the Gospel with them. One person was Philip, and this man took the Gospel to the people in Samaria before being told by an angel of an opportunity to teach on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza.
2. Philip went on this road and ends up running into a chariot that was carrying an *"Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury."* This man had been to Jerusalem to worship and was now reading Isaiah out loud.
3. Philip is told by the Spirit to go up to the chariot, and he takes the opportunity to ask the man whether or not he understood what he was reading. The man states that he needs someone to explain things to him, so Philip does that very thing. *"Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture."*

E. Acts 10:1-48 — Peter & Cornelius

1. The Apostle Peter is once again focused on in Acts as he goes into a trance. He sees heaven open and a sheet comes down that contains all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice tells him to kill and eat, but Peter refuses because of the unclean nature of these animals. Three times this takes place with the voice telling Peter *"What God has made clean, do not call impure."*
2. Peter is greatly confused by what has taken place, but he then receives a visit from some men who are from the household of Cornelius who was a Gentile centurion for the Italian Regiment, a devout and holy man. He had received a vision telling him to send for Peter, and these men were at Peter's location to take him back to Cornelius. Peter went with them the next day and has the opportunity to speak to this man and his household concerning Jesus.

3. He speaks to Cornelius while realizing, based upon his vision and the current situation, that Gentiles were now able to receive the Gospel message of Jesus. He begins to speak about everything that he had witnessed concerning Jesus as the Messiah of God. He had the Holy Spirit and power. He did many great deeds among the people, and yet they had Him killed, but God raised Him up. He commanded the Apostles to preach on His behalf, and Peter was fulfilling that very mission at that moment while He shared Jesus with Cornelius and his household.

F. Acts 13:13-41 — Paul In Pisidian Antioch

1. Paul finds himself in Pisidian Antioch where he goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath day in order to hopefully have the opportunity to share the Word of God with people.
2. After the Law is read, the leaders of the synagogue open up the floor for anyone who might like to speak a word of encouragement to the people who are gathered. This, of course, is the exact type of opportunity that Paul is looking for and he takes full advantage.
3. Like Peter and Stephen, Paul goes through some of the history of Israel (specifically focusing on David) to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that He had promised and done for them. Speaking specifically of David, ***“From this man’s descendant, as he promised, God brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus.”*** Paul then rebukes the residents of Jerusalem who had Jesus put to death, but affirms that God raised Him to show that He is the fulfillment of everything that God had planned for man’s salvation.

G. Acts 17:16-34 — Paul In Athens

1. Later on, Paul finds himself in Athens, and he becomes deeply distressed because of the idols that filled up this city. It is obvious to him that these people are religious, so he searches out ways to speak to these religious people.
2. He does so by going to the synagogues and marketplaces every day. He had some debates with some people, but they seem to be genuinely curious because they bring him to the Areopagus. They wanted to hear his ***“new teaching”***, and we know that Paul was not going to let such an opportunity pass him up.
3. Paul stands before the people and addresses the people of Athens concerning the “Unknown God” that they had an altar set up to worship. He establishes that this God is the true God of creation who created all of the peoples of the earth. He is the God that men naturally long for, and it is in Him that we ***“live and move and have our being.”*** He even mentions some of their own poets who spoke of all people being His offspring. He is not an God that can be fashioned by men, but He is of a divine nature and demands for all people to repent because of a day of impending judgment.

Each of these examples show us that sharing the Word of God isn’t something that demands rocket science or some crazy type of approach or formula. It is as simple as opening our eyes, our mouths, and our Bibles. Let’s finish by showing those common themes within these examples.

III. Common Themes?

A. Disciples have their eyes open for people and situations where the Gospel message is needed.

1. Many of these examples involve disciples recognizing that they have a vast audience in front of them. Peter, Paul, and Stephen all recognize those opportunities as instances where they can share the Word of God.
2. As disciples, we must keep our eyes peeled for the exact same thing. We must keep our eyes open for those moments when we might have crowds or individuals coming around us and spiritual topics are at hand. The Gospel & Word of God are needed in so many different places, and it can do so much good if we will simply identify those times when it can be shared.

B. Disciples are courageous and willing to say the right thing at the right moment.

1. In those moments, these disciples were ready to share what needed to be shared. There were times where the crowd could have been quite hostile, and Stephen was even willing to share with people that were actively against what he had been stating. He was only able to do such a thing because he was courageous and had confidence in the message that he was going to be sharing with those people in that moment.
2. Do we have such courage? Are we willing to share the necessary Word of God in the right moment when it is needed? Have we made that decision beforehand? If we wait until that moment, then we shouldn't be surprised when we shrink away! We must prepare ourselves for such moments, and we can do so by depending on the right source.

C. Disciples depend upon the truths of God and His Word...not personal opinions, experiences, and beliefs.

1. These men didn't go into these situations sharing their own wisdom! Instead, they relied upon the Holy Spirit to guide them to say the right thing at the right moment. They were willing to share the truth of God's Word because they recognized that it would lead men to be saved by the blood of Jesus.
2. Do we recognize the same thing? Are we going to be fully dependent upon the truths that are found within God's Word? If we will fully trust in God's Word and prepare ourselves to share those truths in the right moment then we can be successful in fulfilling the desires of Jesus for His disciples to be busy teaching others about Him.

Let me also point out that the Gospel isn't accepted by every single person that hears the truth of God's Word. This is seen just within this last example in **Acts 17**. There were some people who flat out rejected Paul. Some said they'd hear him another time. Then others accepted and became obedient to the Gospel. Our responsibility is to share the message. The Gospel changes hearts.

We can often be so intimidated by the prospect of sharing God's Word with other people, but we need to recognize that doing so doesn't demand that we do backflips or crack secret formulas. We simply need to keep our eyes open for situations where we have opportunity to share the truth of God's Word and take advantage of those situations by opening our mouths. We need not think that we have to have all of the wisdom or answers because God's Word contains those things. We simply need to share what He has already revealed to us, and allow for its power to do what it does...change people lives by changing their hearts. May we simply be busy excellently sharing the Word of God to His glory alone.