

“SENT INTO THE WORLD”

INTRODUCTION: In the Gospel of John, Jesus is concerned that you and I believe one thing:

1. *That God the Father sent Jesus into the world.*

- a. 40 times Jesus and John refer to the fact that God *sent* Jesus into the world.
- b. Jesus’ most popular way to refer to God in the Gospel of John is to call God “*Him who sent Me.*”
- c. According to Jesus, to be saved is to believe in Him as One sent from God.

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:28-29)

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

- d. Jesus is greatly concerned that the world know that God has *sent* Him into the world.
 - i. *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26)*
 - ii. *“...so that the world may know that you sent Me.”*

2. **D. A. Carson:** *The Gospel According to John: Pillar NTC; p. 556.*

- a. *...because this one true God has supremely revealed himself in the person of his Son, knowledge of God cannot be divorced from knowledge of Jesus Christ. Indeed, knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom God has sent, is the ultimate access to knowledge of God. Nor is this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ merely intellectual, mere information (though it invariably includes information). In a Gospel that ranks belief no less central than knowledge to the acquisition of eternal life, it is clear that the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ entails fellowship, trust, personal relationship, faith. There is no more powerful evangelistic theme.*

3. Jesus **never** lost sight of the fact that God *sent* Him on a divine *mission* of redemption.

- a. This is the heart of the Gospel: *God sent His Son to invade the world, usher in the Kingdom of God, rescue mankind from sin and hell.*

- b. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*
- c. *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)*
- d. *...but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:43)*
- e. *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (1 Tim. 1:15)*
- f. *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Gal. 4:4-5)*
- g. *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)*
- h. *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9-13)*

4. **The Fundamental Gospel Message:** *God sent His Son into the world to save us from our sins.*

5. *Here is a Christian:* The one who believes that God sent Jesus into the world to be our Savior. It's just that simple.

6. **Lesslie Newbigin:** *The Light Has Come;* (p. 232).

The recognition that Jesus is the one whom the Father sent is the essence of the Christian faith, and it corollary in that Jesus has sent his disciples into the world in the same manner and for the same purpose for which he himself was sent by the Father.

7. This is the message of Christmas: *Incarnation & Redemption.*

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown when Thou camest to earth for me; but in Bethlehem's home was there found no room for Thy holy nativity. O come to my heart, Lord Jesus – There is room in my heart for Thee! (Hymn #127, stanza #1)

8. And this is the **essence** of the Christian life: *We are a "sent" people with a mission to the world.*

- a. *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:17-19)*
- b. *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21)*

- c. *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19-20)
- d. *...and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.* (Luke 24:46-48)
- e. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)

9. Jesus' thoughts are *clear* in this area: "As you sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...as the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

10. **An interesting fact:** Paul's conversion and calling (testimony) is recorded for us 3 or 4 times in Acts:

a. A *paradigm* of a Christian conversion

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

b. What a Christian is called to be: *a sent one*

i. *apostollos: apostello*

ii. *But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* (Acts 9:13-16)

iii. *And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'* (Acts 22:21)

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." (Acts 23:11)

iv. *And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles— to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'* (Acts 26:14-18)

c. "As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

11. **How is it that Jesus "sends" us into the world?** (four observations)

I. CHRIST SENT US INCARNATIONALLY INTO THE WORLD

1. Jesus came to *be* one of us long before He *preached* to any of us. This is the wonder of the **incarnation**.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again,

"I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:10-18)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

2. Jesus began His redemptive mission to the world with His own family and His own home town:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:16-22)

3. **Candidly**, it did not go any better for Jesus Christ in preaching to His relatives and neighbors than it does for us!

- a. *And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away. (Luke 4:23-30)*
 - b. Jesus stayed in **Galilee** for most of His ministry: *Capernaum, Cana, Nazareth, Magdala, Gennaseret and Tiberias.*
 - c. His first miracles were in Galilee: *Cana* (a wedding of friends and relatives) and *Healing the Officer's son* (in Cana).
 - d. When Jesus was dying on the Cross, He was concerned about the care of His Mother.
 - e. Jesus had four brother and at least two sisters who did not believe in Him at first.
Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:55-58)
For not even his brothers believed in him. (John 7:5)
 - f. And Jesus was concerned for their souls.
 - g. After He rose from the dead, He made a personal appearance to His brother *James*.
 - h. James, Jude, and Mary were converted and became leaders of the early church (two epistles).
 - i. Jesus chose 11 Galileans and 1 Judean to be His 12 apostles (*Judas Iscariot was the Judean*).
4. **My point:** Jesus came and lived among a specific group of people – a family, a town, a region, a nation. He evangelized these people **first**. Samaritans and Gentiles were saved but only secondarily:
For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)
5. It was **tough** for Him to witness to them – they were often angry at Him; dismissive, and at times violent.
 6. **But at the same time** *He had a natural connection to them. They were his "kinfolk" – His first mission field. And He brought them to salvation.*
 7. **This is true also of you:** Every believer is a missionary, an "apostle" (a "sent one"), planted in a family, a community, a people group.
 - a. God's *primary mission strategy* is to evangelize one's family and circle of friends.

- b. Will they get mad at you? Yep! But only because they feel free to tell you what they think!
 - c. Do they trust you? More than any other witness they encounter.
 - d. Will they watch you like a hawk? Yes! And *there is the power of your witness – your changed life that they cannot deny!*
8. **Example:** In the summer of 1976, I became a Christian. The first Christian on either side of my family for generations past.
- a. All my family was Roman Catholic and not pleased with my new found evangelical faith.
 - b. I witnessed to them and offended every one of them.
 - c. Then I decided on a new tactic: *I gave each one of them an NAS Bible as a gift, devotional guides, and book like “How to be Born Again” (B. Graham), “The Late Great Planet Earth” (H. Lindsey), and “Mere Christianity” (C. S. Lewis).*
 - d. And I set to pray for their souls daily for their conversion.
 - e. One by one, with the exception of one, they all came to personal faith in Christ.
 - f. Because I was a great witness? No...I wasn't. But because I loved them, I shared my Bible with them,
 - g. I prayed for them – *and they saw not a perfect son or brother but a changed man.*
9. I **incarnated** a life with God, and they saw it, and eventually wanted it.
10. This incarnational witness leads to a second aspect of our being sent into the world.

II. CHRIST SENT US INTO THE WORLD WITH WORD AND DEED

1. Luke tells us an amazing thing about the witness of Jesus in the world:

As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. (Acts 10:36-38)
2. Jesus combined mercy and compassion with verbal witness.
3. *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (John 17:18)*
4. **Illustration:** As I set out to win my family and friends' souls, I did a lot of arguing with them.
 - a. I battled with them over the Pope, prayers to Mary, the sacraments, purgatory, transubstantiation, the Mass, and other things.
 - b. The man who led me to Christ said to me one day, *“Mikie, God didn't send you back to your family to argue about the Church but rather tell them about Jesus. If you honor them, they will respect your witness.”*
 - c. He was right.

5. The way people's hearts became open to my witness was simple: *I decided to stick with them through times of sorrow and suffering until they brought up the subject of God, Christ, eternal life and forgiveness.*
 - a. Divorces, cancer, loneliness, bereavement over a death, job stress, disappointments.
 - b. Compassion for them led to conversations with them.
6. **We evangelicals are insensitive to others.** Our conservative values, our reformed faith, our evangelical ethics, and our Biblical worldview often get in the way of our witness:
 - a. We are censorious, argumentative, simplistic, and harsh.
 - b. *No wonder we aren't seeing many come to Christ.*
 - c. Root problem? **We are proud.**
 - d. We actually think, *"We are better than those unsaved people because we chose Christ and they haven't."*
7. **For the record:** You did **not** choose Jesus; He chose you!
 - a. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (John 15:16)*
 - b. *We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)*
 - c. Westminster Confession of Faith; 3:8
The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel. (WCF 3:8)
8. John the apostle makes it clear that the love of God for us not only led us to salvation but should send us out into the world to love others as God loved us!
By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)
Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to

believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:7-21)

9. When evangelicals became **the Moral Majority**, they stopped loving the lost and stopped bringing them to Christ.
10. **I will say to you:** *When I was converted in 1976, it was the love of the people of Central Church in Memphis that opened my heart to Christ. I don't see that kind of love in the Church anymore – and I haven't seen it since around 1985!*
11. We need to follow the exhortation of the apostle Paul –

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:5-6)
12. **For the Record:** You do **not** have the right to speak to people one-on-one as I do from the pulpit.
 - a. *Preaching* is a prophetic gift.
 - b. *Proclaiming* the Gospel from a pulpit, in an auditorium to a large group of people is vastly different from witnessing to a person.
 - c. *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:1-2)*
 - d. *Witnessing* involves a personal relationship accompanied by dialog, lots of listening, and “sharing” of oneself.
13. **You** and **I** are called to be *witnesses*. Very few of us are called to be *preachers*.
14. **Remember this:** the next time you witness to an unbeliever:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:11-12)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

III. CHRIST SENT US TO INVITE THE WORLD TO CHURCH

1. One thing Jesus continually did was to **invite** people into the circle of Him and His friends.
2. His famous words were these, "*Come and see!*"
3. Do you remember the people Jesus encountered in John 1-5? How He invited them all into His presence and made room for them in His life?

- a. John and Andrew...

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. (John 1:35-39)

- b. Philip and Nathanael...

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." (John 1:44-46)

- c. The Samaritan Woman at the well...

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him. (John 4:28-30)

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:39-42)

- d. Choosing the 12 apostles...

And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach. (Mark 3:13-14)

- e. *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)*

4. Our God and His Incarnate Son are an inviting God...

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)

5. The **best way** to begin to help another find Jesus Christ is to invite them to join you at church!
 - a. Worship services and the preaching of the Word
 - b. Sunday School and our adult communities
 - c. Covenant groups, women's Anchor studies, Men's groups
 - d. Youth, children, 1822 activities
 - e. *Non-Christians are invited to join us in everything we do except to take the Lord's Supper (for believers only).*

6. This is how the early church grew so quickly: *The followers of Christ invited others to join them at church...*
 - a. In the life of the *Christ Community*
 - b. To *experience* part of a life with God
 - c. *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)*

7. **Eusebius Pamphilus** was the lead pastor (Bishop) of Caesarea in Palestine. He lived from c. 260-340 AD. He wrote the first comprehensive history of the early church.
 - a. *Ecclesiastical History*
 - b. In Book One of his record, he records for us "*How the Christian Doctrine soon spread throughout the world*" (Book 1; chapter 3; p. 52).

Thus, then, under a celestial influence and co-operation, the doctrine of the Saviour, like the rays of the sun, quickly irradiated the whole world. Presently, in accordance with divine prophecy, the sound of his inspired evangelists and apostles had gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. Throughout every city and village, like a replenished barn floor, churches were rapidly found abounding, and filled with members from every people. Those who, in consequence of the delusions that had descended to them from their ancestors, had been fettered by the ancient disease of idolatrous superstition, were liberated, by the power of Christ, through the teaching and miracles of his messengers. And, as if delivered from dreadful masters, and emancipated from the most cruel bondage,

on the one hand renounced the whole multitude of gods and demons, and on the other, confessed that there was only one true God, the Creator of all things. This same God they now also honoured with the rites of a true piety, under the influence of that inspired and reasonable worship which had been planted among men by our Savior.

8. In other words: *Communities of faith (local churches) sprang up, and as pagans were invited to worship with the saints, they left their temples and idols to embrace Christ in the churches.*
9. In his book *Evangelism in the Early Church*, **Michael Green** talks about the ways the first Christians evangelized their world. He wrote... (pp. xv-xvi)

There can be no doubt that it was the changed lifestyle of the early Christians which made such a deep impact upon classical antiquity. Three things in particular stood out. First was the personal transformation in their character as the Holy Spirit was welcomed in. Second, there was the impression made by Christians corporately. The church had qualities unparalleled in the ancient world. Nowhere else would you find slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, engaging in table fellowship and showing a real love for one another? That love overflowed to outsiders, and in times of plague and disaster the Christians shone by means of their service to the communities in which they live must have had a tremendous impact. We know it did. You could mow these Christians down, you could throw them to the lions, but you could not make them deny their Lord or hate their persecutors.

10. **Billy Graham** says that 90% of the people who are saved begin that process when a loved one or friend invites them to church.
11. **Do not make this mistake:** *Do not falsely assume that non-Christians are not interested in spiritual things, in sermons, in understanding the Bible, in prayers, or in finding out more about God, Christ and Christianity. All people – and I mean **all** people – are deeply spiritual!*
12. **I stand before you as proof that this is true:** I am a saved man, a Christian and a minister of the Gospel because a guy named **Wiley Patterson** kept inviting me to church and would not take no for an answer!

IV. CHRIST SENT US INTO THE WORLD WITH A SIMPLE AND CLEAR MESSAGE

1. Jesus came into the world to preach the good news; He said so Himself...

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (Luke 4:18-19)

...but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:43)

2. We should be ready to tell people three simple but profoundly true things:

- a. What Jesus did to save us from sin

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

- b. Why this is important for every man

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

- c. How this has changed your life

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

3. **Do not assume** that people have heard this or that they understand this, or that this has become “old hat” to them. It has not, and they do not.
4. We’ve got to share the truth with those who would be saved –
- I didn’t say “*preach a sermon.*”
 - I said *share* the truth of salvation.
 - “*Would you mind if I shared with you how I became a Christian?*”
5. We need to “*gossip the Gospel*” ...**Michael Green** talks about this in his book about the early church (pp. xviii-xix)

First, they did most of their evangelism on what we would call secular ground. You find them in the laundries, on the roads and in the wine bars talking about Jesus to all who would listen. A second priority of the early Christians seems to have been personal conversations with individuals. Third, it is very noticeable that the home provided the most natural context for gossiping the Gospel. In most parts of the world where there is an explosion of Christianity these days, home meetings are critical to the growth. They do not attract hostile attention. They are informal and make question and answer easy, and the transition from worship to conversation to food very easy.

6. Always be ready to offer “*a reason for the hope that lies within you.*” You’ll be amazed how many are willing to listen.

CONCLUSION: The current Discovery Class bears out every single point I’ve made today...

- I asked the class last week: “*How did you get here to Christ Covenant Church and why are you interested in joining our church?*”
- Here were their answers:
 - Several said, “*My friend invited me.*”

- b. One woman came via the Anchor women's studies and her sister's invitation.
 - c. Another lady came because her husband came first and then we prayed for her and her prayer was answered.
 - d. One came via Campus Outreach.
 - e. Some heard us on the radio.
3. **Every single person** mentioned these four things –
- a. Someone invited them to church.
 - b. The Christ Covenant people were friendly, inviting and helpful – they cared for them.
 - c. They wanted to grow in their faith and liked the preaching and teaching from the pastors.
 - d. They were looking for community: a place to belong.
4. **There you have it:** *Invitation...Hospitality...the Word...the Caring Community.*
5. We have been *sent* into the world for one reason: to bring people to church and then to God through a living faith in Jesus Christ.
- a. *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.* (John 17:18)
 - b. *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."* (John 20:21)
 - c. *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.* (1 Peter 3:18)
6. If we pray for the lost, look for "*divine appointments*" to share about Christ, and do what Jesus did, people will be saved.
7. "*Come and you will see!*" It still works!
8. You don't have to "win people to Christ." You just need to bring people into your life, your home, your church so they can "see" Jesus in action.
9. **Jesus will do the rest!**