

THE MESSAGE

Leader pages on pp. 142-145

THE POINT:

JESUS SAVES THOSE
WHO TRUST IN HIM.

ROMANS 10:8B-17

^{8b} The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.

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¹¹ For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, ¹² since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. ¹³ For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

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¹⁴ How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. ¹⁶ But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? ¹⁷ **So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.**

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

Righteousness (v. 10)—A right standing before God, achieved not through human effort but through justification, where human sinfulness is exchanged for the righteousness of Christ.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL THAT GIVES SALVATION?

Developing relationships and friendships online has become commonplace, but what happens if one of those persons refuses to meet? A documentary series on TV investigates just such online-only relationships. Suspicions arise that the person refusing to meet isn't who he pretends to be. Unfortunately, most cases are heartbreaking because the person being deceived is in the dark about the relationship.

We long to connect with others who will accept and love us authentically. Many who feel they have no success in relationships turn to the internet as a way to connect with someone else. This documentary reveals the desperate need to find someone who will honor others.

Trust is a major issue in our society. The show is indicative of a culture plagued with identity theft, child abductions, trafficking, scams, and selfish ambition. Our culture is severely lacking in trust, but fortunately there's an answer. His name is Jesus. A trusting relationship with Him provides the promise of an eternal future with One who can always be trusted.

A Message About Christ //

Romans 10:8b-10

God doesn't make His truth difficult to find for those who truly want to find it. It would defeat His purposes for all to receive an invitation to salvation if the path was a complete mystery. As Paul began verse 8, he said, "The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." Discovering and experiencing salvation is not some massively difficult task; it is as near as what we do with our mouths and hearts.

What we do with our mouths and hearts are expressed in two simultaneous actions:

- **Believe in your heart.** Faith is belief and trust in something or someone. Our salvation is not dependent on anything we do, but it is secured by our faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone. Consider it a gift given by God for us to cherish and protect.

Belief is much deeper and richer than just believing something is true. As James said,



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“Even the demons believe—and they shudder” (Jas. 2:19). Belief in this passage is a belief that is reflected in our total trust and reliance on what we believe. Through faith and trust in Jesus, we believe and receive Him as our Savior, the perfect atoning sacrifice through His death and resurrection. His resurrection is the validation of His sacrifice for our sins. He was the first to overcome death, and He made the way for us to be reconciled to God. This is the gospel we believe in.

- **Confess with your mouth.** We confirm our belief in the gospel and the lordship of Christ by confessing it with our mouth. Confessing Jesus as Lord is to set Him apart from any other gods. As Savior, Jesus paid the price for our sin as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin. Our submission to Him as Savior is our acknowledgment of Him paying that price; therefore, our lives are no longer our own. Since He paid the price, He is Lord and Master, having all power and authority over us (Phil. 2:5-11).

HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONFESS AND BELIEVE IN THESE VERSES?

Our inward belief and outward expression go hand in hand, two sides of the same coin. (The order is “confess:” and “believe” in verse 9, and it is “believe” and “confess” in verse 10.) The result of confessing and believing is salvation and righteousness. Jesus saves us by removing our sin and His righteousness is ascribed to us (Rom. 5:19).

A Message for All People // Romans 10:11-13

The gospel is not an elite social club which only extends invitations to those deemed worthy of membership. Such an elite club would be empty anyway, because none of us are worthy. That was Paul’s point in the opening chapters of the Book of Romans: no matter how good or bad we see ourselves, we have all sinned and are not worthy.

But the beauty of the gospel is that, just as all of us are unworthy sinners, all of us have the opportunity to accept and believe the gospel. All of us! The realization of this truth may have been slow in coming for the earliest Christians, but the Book of Acts contains repeated reminders of this truth. When Jesus reminded His followers of the promised Holy Spirit,



DIGGING DEEPER JESUS IS LORD

Confessing Jesus as Lord is the same as acknowledging that He is God. Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). This idea would have been difficult for devout Jews to accept. In fact, the Jewish leaders crucified Jesus because He claimed equality with God. This would have been a huge sticking point and a primary reason that many Jews in the first century were rejecting Jesus as Messiah. But salvation is not possible without submitting to the authority of Christ over one’s life. When we say Jesus is Lord, we commit ourselves to follow and obey Him. If Jesus is our Lord, then He owns us and rightfully can tell us what to do. Jesus is Lord does not need our acknowledgement for it to be true. He is Lord of all creation, and someday all will submit to that truth (Phil. 2:9-11).

In what ways has Jesus been Lord in your life?



He told them the Spirit would empower them to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit would enable the disciples to carry the gospel from Jerusalem, a solely Jewish culture, to Judea, the region where Jerusalem was located, to Samaria, extending to the ends of the earth, which is inclusive of all.

WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT JESUS IS LORD OF ALL?

These verses assure us that God desires the invitation for salvation to be extended to whosoever will come so they won't be ashamed. Shame is that painful emotion we feel when becoming conscious of our guilt and wrongdoing. Adam and Eve felt no shame (Gen. 2:25) until they sinned against God—and the shame of sin has been with us ever since. But when we believe and trust in Jesus, who took our condemnation and shame upon Himself, we are freed from sin and freed from shame.

A Message to Be Shared // Romans 10:14-17

As beautiful as the promise of salvation is, it does not happen in a vacuum. Someone had

to relay the message that leads to salvation. Starting with the point of salvation, Paul walked us backwards to see what was involved and who initiated the whole process. It all begins with God Himself!

- Christ sends the one who proclaims.
- The one who proclaims preaches the message.
- The message is heard.
- Those who hear believe.
- Those who believe call on the name of the Lord.
- Those who call on the name of the Lord are saved.

Salvation is not automatic. Just because someone hears the gospel doesn't mean he is automatically saved. Does a person merely hear the words—in one ear and out the other—or does he think about them and take them to heart? The Hebrew word for “hear” carries the idea that you obey and follow what you hear, and the Greek word for “hear” Paul used in this passage often implies the same idea. When John referred to God hearing our prayers, it

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means He answers them (1 John 5:14-15). Therefore, it's only the person who truly hears—takes to heart the message he heard—who believes. The connection between hearing and obeying is seen in verse 16: “Not all obeyed the gospel.” Paul made a strong connection between faith and obedience. A person must act on what he hears.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah told of how those in captivity would welcome the messenger who brought them the news of their coming release: the feet that brought such good news would be seen as beautiful. Paul applied that same idea to those who brought the news that freedom from captivity to sin was available. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE GOSPEL THAT YOU'D LIKE TO COMMUNICATE TO OTHERS?

Not everyone will accept the gospel, but those who hear and believe will be forever grateful to those who bring the good news to them. We are those heralds—the ones who call out and deliver the message of life.

DID YOU KNOW?

We have inventor and engineer Lewis Howard Latimer to thank for his work in helping to make the telephone possible. Latimer worked closely with Alexander Graham Bell to draft the patent for the telephone. He was born in 1848 to George and Rebecca Latimer who escaped from slavery. Latimer's father eventually was able to purchase his freedom but disappeared following the Dred Scott decision in 1857. After his father's disappearance, Latimer worked to support his family. After some time in the navy, he worked at Crosby and Gould patent law office, where he taught himself mechanical drawing and drafting by observing the work of draftsmen. Soon he was promoted from office boy to draftsman. Receiving an assignment to work with Bell, Latimer helped draft the patent for Bell's design of the telephone. Along with Alexander Graham Bell, we should think about Lewis Howard Latimer when we use our smart phones.²²

How can we use our smart phones to share the gospel message?

LIVE IT

What will you do with the message of salvation?

Think back to when you received Christ as your Savior. Someone either personally shared their faith with you or you heard the gospel message preached. What you heard touched your heart, you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Now it's your turn to give to someone else what has been given to you. As a believer you hold in your heart a message that can make a difference in someone else's life.

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- **Reflect.** Reflect on those who contributed to your salvation and consider what they did that led you to accept the good news they shared? List ways you can do something similar for others.
- **Write.** Write a note or call the individuals who played a role in your coming to faith in Christ. Thank them for their love and obedience in sharing the gospel with you.
- **Go.** Prayerfully consider those whom God has placed in your path. Look for the opportunities to tell them the message of Christ. Let God empower you to be an instrument that brings others to Him.

DAILY READINGS

1. SHARE LOVE // 1 JOHN 4:8-10

Most people agree that the word “love” is powerful. It has been touted as the most powerful force in the universe. Psychologists prescribe it as an anti-depressant, giving people a reason to live. Scientists believe it can help with physical growth. But the Bible’s description of love surpasses the world’s view of love in power because love is the very essence of God. God’s love explains the reason Christ died for us. This makes love the most powerful message in the world, because it is the reason we receive eternal life. It makes sense for us that when we can’t use words to share the gospel message, just share love.

It’s a universal language that everyone understands.

2. PAID IN FULL // ROMANS 6:23

When buying a car there may be hidden fees, upgrades, and fine print. Most of us don’t fully understand the real cost of the vehicle we purchase. We simply sign a contract and drive it home. Then every month when the note comes due, it become painfully clear what we are paying for. God doesn’t slip in extra penalties or fees. He doesn’t try to trick us into paying more than we intended. His Word is clear that the cost of sin is death. But, unlike paying for a car, God provides the way to satisfy the debt. We are no longer accountable to the massive debt we owed because of sin.

Through Jesus’ death on the cross, He paid our accounts in full.

3. BOTH SAVIOR AND LORD // MARK 1:22

Capernaum was a fishing village, and the people who lived there were common, simple people—the kind of people to whom Jesus most often directed His ministry. His first stop was the house of God. He went into the synagogue in Capernaum and taught there. People came to listen; however, they had

never heard a teacher quite like Jesus. They said, “he was teaching them as one who had authority,” and they were right. Jesus has complete authority. When we receive Christ as Savior, few of us give thought to Jesus being our Lord. We should ask ourselves whether Jesus has rightful authority over our habits, attitude, the words that come out of our mouths, our very lives.

We must allow Him to work in every area of our lives.

4. FULLY DEVOTED // ACTS 2:38-42

“Devoted” is an interesting word that means having a sense of single focus. To devote is to sacrifice. Devotion is the giving of oneself selflessly to a particular person, cause, or activity. The first church members were not living haphazardly—they were devoted. They were giving all they had—body and soul—to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such devotion moves beyond emotion to a deeply rooted, long-term relationship with God. It becomes a dynamic walk with Christ that can change the world. That’s exactly what happened then, and it can happen today. Let it begin with you.

Trust God to use your devotion to Him to change the world.

5. LIVING FOR GOD // 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

The apostle Paul touches on some important principles for following Jesus. He emphasizes our personal freedom in Christ. Embedded in what Paul teaches is an important statement for Christian living: in everything we do, we are to live for God and His glory. The Westminster Catechism uses this question, “What is the chief end of man?” And it answers with this declaration: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Many of us live only to glorify and enjoy ourselves. The Holy Spirit will reorient our lives to live for God.

That’s what the Christian life is about—doing everything for God and for His glory.



Best Practices for Sharing Your Faith

BY TARRA TAYLOR

I grew up in the church. But I have absolutely no recollection of sharing the gospel being modeled to me as a child or teen. Thus, this act doesn't come naturally to me; it gives me pause. Since learning of its importance, I've found the following approaches to be very helpful in sharing my faith.

- **View it as a personal responsibility.** I used to view it as somebody else's job to share the gospel with others. Surely someone else will do it, I thought. A mom, dad, sister, brother, cousin, friend, teacher, preacher. Someone. Anyone but me. But Matthew 28:19-20 commands every believer to make disciples just as Jesus Himself did. Author of *Fox Fever*, Herb Hodges states, "The responsibility for the Great Commission must be seen as a personal responsibility, and the fulfillment of it must be personally implemented."²³ No one is exempt from sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.
- **Pinpoint lost people.** How do we identify them? Steve Gaines, author of *Share Jesus Like It Matters*, offers seven concentric circles of relationships that can help believers discover lost people: (a) self; (b) immediate family; (c) relatives; (d) friends; (e) neighbors and business associates; (f) acquaintances; and (g) person "X." An acquaintance may be the teller,

server, or clerk that we run into periodically whereas person “X” refers to the stranger we meet and sense the need to share Jesus.²⁴

- **Look for open doors.** Seizing the moment of open doors requires us to be good listeners. A good listener pays attention to what the speaker is saying, validating his/her thoughts and opinions. When a person feels validated, he/she is more likely to share from the heart and welcome the ideas of others. Instead of focusing so much on what we have to say, offer a safe place for others to vent. The Lord will provide just the right moment for us to share his truths.
- **Acknowledge human’s imperfection.** Many lost people live under the misconception that to be Christian means to be perfect. Thus, they tune us out or refuse our testimony because they don’t feel we share the sin commonality. However, it is up to us to put their minds at ease and clear up this fallacy. Romans 3:23 states, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- **Build relationships with sinners.** If we are never around lost people, there is no way for the light to pierce the darkness. This may require us to leave our comfort zone of being around people who think, look, and/or behave like we do, but everyone involved will have the opportunity for growth.
- **Use compassion and sensitivity.** We want to be careful not to come off in a forceful and judgmental manner when sharing our faith. This behavior will cause listeners to shut down. In contrast, we should approach others in love and sincerity of heart, realizing we may be the difference maker in a person’s life. Colossians 3:12 affirms, “Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”
- **Take a risk.** Taking a risk demands confidence and boldness. We must be mentally prepared to carry out Christ’s mandate in the face of fear and rejection. This can be accomplished by availing ourselves to be used as instruments, trusting that the Lord will do the work. “You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in

perfect peace, for it is trusting you,” explains Isaiah 26:3.

- **Value the questions and concerns of unbelievers.** A good plan of action involves anticipating the questions and concerns others may have. This allows us to approach the situation with well-researched and thought out answers. It’s also a good idea to simply ask, “What questions do you have?” This allows the person to discuss his or her personal reservations about salvation.

• **Know the plan of salvation.** The only way to receive the gift of salvation is by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Romans 10: 9-10, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.” Many of us were taught this simple technique in Sunday School that can still be utilized today; the ABC’s of Salvation:

A – Admit that you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

B – Believe that God sent His only Son that you may have eternal life.

C – Confess with your mouth that “Jesus is Lord.”

- **Follow up.** It is important for us to follow up with people after sharing our faith, whether they accept Christ when we first present Him or not. Schedule a follow-up meeting and encourage prayer and Bible reading in the meantime.

Sharing our faith can be very challenging, especially when it does not come naturally. The more we get to know Him, the more we love Him. And the more we love Him, the more we will talk about Him.

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