

LESSON THREE: MISSION

BIG IDEA

Some of us view God as living behind a locked gate where He can't be reached. Others think of getting to God like scaling an endless ladder, where we strain to climb and climb but never really reach the top. God's Word says He is near to us and not remote. All God asks us is to _____ in Jesus and live in light of that redemption. The truth is that God offers Himself as a free _____ to all through Jesus. With that in mind, how can we share this gift with others? The most powerful tool you have, outside of the Bible, is your own _____. People connect with stories. Share how you came to know Jesus and invite them to experience the presence of God that heals and transforms broken lives.

DISCUSSION

Share your salvation story. When did you decide to follow Jesus?

What does being an ambassador for Christ mean to you?

Talk about a time someone shared their faith with you. What can you learn from how they did it?

Take some time to reflect on these questions in your journal!

TEACHING

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." (Mk 8:27-29)

The Christian faith is the _____ in a massive God redemptively working outside of time and all earthly authority. It isn't dependent on any decision or ability of man. It is something God has chosen to do for His glory. At the same time, the Christian faith is deeply _____. Jesus pulls his disciples together, asking what they hear about the public perspective on him and his work. But He doesn't just ask what they think; He asks what do you think and believe. There is no more important question about you than what you _____ about God.

Three _____ about God

A _____

A common perception of God is that He is locked away behind a distant, holy gate to which we do not have the key. Behind the gate, God is busy doing religious and important things that warrant his attention more than I do. God is outside of my reach, and I am outside of his priorities.

Thankfully, the Bible describes God differently. God is not a _____, the cosmic CEO in the corner office with whom we can never get an appointment. He does not keep us at arm's length. The book of Acts says: "that they (mankind) should seek God,

and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us," (Acts 17:27)

A _____ of _____

Others consider God existing on the other side of our giant pile of baggage. We think, "If I can deal with my baggage and past mistakes, God can accept me." "I just need to fix a couple things before I try to have a relationship with God."

The truth is that God's _____ than your baggage. It isn't contingent on who you are, where you've been, what you've done, or who you did it with. God loves you right now! Paul reminds the church in Rome: "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)

An _____

It is common to view God through the _____. Some of us think our evil deeds keep us from God (baggage), and some believe our good deeds are too little and rare for God to notice (ladder). We think of God as a good deeds accountant in the sky, regularly notifying us that we haven't hit our quota to earn his good favor.

In John 6:29, the disciples of Jesus find themselves questioning what God required of them. Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." Jesus said God desires that we _____: place our faith, trust, and hope in Him. Our works don't save us; we are saved by placing our faith in the person and work of Jesus.

The _____ About God

He is a _____

Despite our misconceptions, God is clear on who He is: a free gift. God wants to give you something, something you desperately need and something you can find nowhere else: a _____. He gives us this gift even though we don't deserve it or haven't earned it. It is free to you at great cost to Him because He loves you. This is the accurate picture of God. I hope you can see it in high definition. God loves you and freely gives himself to you as Savior and friend.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9)

Once we understand what people may assume about God, it helps us _____ for them and _____ us to help them better understand who God is.

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 Pet 3:15)

Three Ways to _____ to _____ Your Faith

Be a _____

Jesus was a great friend. Oddly, the _____ community criticized him for being a friend to people who didn't believe in him. Not only did Jesus love sinners, but sinners also loved Jesus! People who didn't believe what Jesus taught still enjoyed being around Jesus. They knew He cared about them, and they enjoyed his company. Jesus never compromised himself to be someone's friend but was full of grace and truth. He was a great and enjoyable friend!

God does not ask us to _____ people. God commands us to love people! Jesus taught his followers to love their neighbor as themselves. "And you shall love the Lord your

God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mk 12:30-31)

People don't care about what you _____. They need to know you _____. Before you open your mouth to share your faith, be a great friend.

_____ your _____

As you have shown people your care for them and prayed for them, there may come a time you are invited to share with them. Ideally, this is not a _____ exchange or event but a _____ interaction between friends. Remember, God calls us to be "seasoned with salt," not "dump salt." (Col 4:6). One of the simplest and most powerful ways we share our faith is to tell our story. It is simple because everyone has a story. It is powerful because there is nothing more significant than a changed life.

In Acts 26, the Apostle Paul presents a straightforward and organized template for sharing personal faith stories. This template is often referred to as the "Pauline Testimony" and serves as a practical guide for believers to articulate their own spiritual journeys.

Who I was _____ Jesus (Acts 26:4-11)

The first part of this template encourages individuals to reflect on their past lives and beliefs. Paul, in this section, describes his life as a devout Pharisee and his zealous persecution of early Christians, highlighting the stark contrast between his previous beliefs and his present faith in Jesus.

How I _____ Jesus (Acts 26:19-23)

The second segment revolves around the moment of encountering Jesus. Paul recounts his transformative experience on the road to Damascus, where he was struck by a blinding light and received a divine commission from the risen Christ. This event marked his conversion to Christianity.

Who I am _____ Jesus (Acts 26:19-23)

Finally, in Acts 26:19-23, Paul underscores the ongoing impact of his encounter with Jesus. He explains how he has dedicated his life to spreading the Gospel message and calls people to repentance, crediting his actions and purpose to his newfound faith in Jesus.

Give on _____

Lastly, invite your friend to a _____ they can experience God. It may be a small group, a church service, or simply out to dinner. Your invitation may be the thing that meets God's work and will in their life in a tangible way. Sometimes people need to be handed a next step, and your prayerful, intentional invite can be the step God uses to draw them to a relationship with him. Christians often take the environments they frequent and experience God's presence for granted. While they exist for your growth and blessing, they are also a tool for an _____.

DIG DEEPER

Even Christians struggle with misperceptions about God. Of the three misconceptions listed, which are you prone to struggle with?

- The Locked Gate
- The Pile of Luggage
- The Endless Ladder

What has gotten in the way of sharing your faith with others? How did you overcome it? If you didn't, how can you find the confidence to share your story and invite others to church?

COMMON QUESTIONS

What if I don't feel _____ to share my faith?

If your faith is in Jesus, you are qualified! You do not have to be a pastor, theologian, or veteran saint walking with the Lord for thirty years to share your faith. You do not have to have all the answers; point people to the One who does.

You have testimonies of how God has worked in your life. You have been touched by Scripture that other people would be blessed to hear about. And by sharing your faith with those God has crossed your path, you may be able to connect with people who do not know a single other Christian. God wants to use you to encourage Christians in their faith and to bring others into relationships with God too.

What if I don't know enough about God and the Bible to _____?

If you know that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again in victory over sin and death, so that if we place our faith in Him, we will be saved, you know enough! Often the fear of the unknown keeps people from sharing their faith. The truth is, usually, people don't even ask the questions we fear being asked.

People appreciate genuine honesty if you do not know how to answer a question. You can say, "That's a good question. I don't know. I will find out and get back to you." Then, include an invitation to a church service or your small group with the answer.

Won't people see my _____ and come to Jesus?

Hoping that people will see that you are nice and moral and then make the connection that they should put their faith in Jesus is asking for a lot. There are plenty of friendly atheists, but that is not grounds to convert to atheism. Most people who are Christians today were led to the Lord by someone – verbally. Our actions should back up our faith, but we should not rely on them alone to point people into a relationship with God. Jesus actively spoke about having a relationship with God, and we are to model our lives after His.

Do people need to _____ to be saved?

There are no magic words that someone must recite to be saved. Prayer does not save people. Faith in Jesus saves people. Getting people connected to Jesus and understanding and investing their faith in Him is essential. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Notice, it doesn't say "whoever prays."

While prayer does not save people, it is an appropriate and excellent response to placing faith in Jesus. You can pray to God, thanking Him for the gift of salvation through Jesus. You can express that you were stuck in sinfulness until trusting in Jesus dying for your sins and resurrecting in victory over them. You can pray for strength and perseverance when trials come and discernment to cast away doubt. You can certainly pray and praise Him for the wonderful relationship He invites us into with Him!

Leading someone in prayer to accept Jesus (keep it simple).

Here are six simple words that represent a sinner's prayer of repentance:

" _____."
I know I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I know only Jesus is capable of saving me.

" _____."
I am sorry for my decisions and the hurt it has caused. I need forgiveness.

" _____."
As best as I know, I am ready to give my life to Jesus and make him my leader.

NEXT STEPS

Make a list of the people in your direct sphere of influence and begin intentionally showing them the love of God. Begin praying for them, paying attention to them, hearing their needs, and making yourself available to serve them in the areas where they need help.

Invite someone you know to attend a Small Group or church with you next Sunday.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

- The Reason for God (Keller)
- The Soul Winner (Spurgeon)
- Contagious Faith (Mittelberg)
- Tell the Truth (Metzger)
- Evangelism as Exiles (Clark)

MEMORY VERSE

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:20)

DAILY SCRIPTURE AND JOURNALING

Day One

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6:29)

Journal: What is the work that God asks us to do? What are you trusting God with in your life right now?

Day Two

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 Pet 3:15)

Journal: What attributes are to characterize our defense of the gospel? How effective are you in this regard? Where could you grow?

Day Three

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mk 12:30-31)

Journal: Who are you finding the most difficult to love right now? Others? Yourself? God? Why?

Day Four

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:16)

Journal: Where is your light shining at its brightest? Where is your light shining at its dimmest?

Day Five

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." (Mk 8:27-29)

Journal: Who is Jesus to you? What is the evidence of this in your daily life and relationships?

PRAYER FOCUS

In addition to praying for specific requests from your group, pray for God to give your group the boldness to live a Matthew 5:16 life: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."