

**Beyond the Norm: A Heart for the Lost**  
**10/19/14**

**Cultural Norms:**

1. We don't care. We don't want to be bothered, persecuted, or inconvenienced.

**Biblical Norm:**

1. God's heart for the lost. He came to seek and save that which is lost.
2. Luke 15
3. God so loved the world that He sacrificed His Son (that is love)
4. He met people where they were at and then invited them to come and see! A Relationship with the lost. Ex: Zacharias (tax collector/thief).

**Practical Applications--Prayer**

1. Let us pray for God's heart for the loss.
2. Let us pray God will give us a sense of urgency (2 Corinthians 5:11). There is no other name under heaven by which people can be saved. People are dying everyday without Christ.
3. Let us pray for the love of Christ to compel us that we are grieved when we see people living without Christ.
4. Pray that we may proclaim the message boldly (As Paul Prayed)

Matthew 9:35-38

**35** Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

**36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **38** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

- Jesus modeled preaching
- He had compassion on them
- He then instructed us to pray for the lost (38)

## **Manuscript—A Heart for the lost is a heart after God**

Today's world's census estimates the world population at over 7 billion people. It also says that less than a third of the world population is Christian, which I think is a very generous number. I would guess it is more like 10%, but only God knows. But for argument sake lets say that it is a third. That means that over 4.5 billion people do not know Jesus Christ as their personal savior. That is crazy isn't it? As Christians we hear all the time about how evangelism is important. Most all churches talk about the great commission, to go out into all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In fact, I would guess that most of you could tell me that Jesus cares about the lost and that He came to seek and save that which is lost. And most Christians know that we are to go out and evangelize. But the truth is that our cultural norm is to not actively or intentionally evangelize. According to research less than 2% of Christians are directly involved in sharing their faith. Rather culturally we are private about our faith. Of course, there are a variety of reasons why we don't share our faith.

For instance, people might think we're weird. We don't want to make people feel upset or uncomfortable. We ourselves don't want to feel uncomfortable. Also, people around us aren't open for people telling them what to believe in. They are used to choosing their own truth, to believing what suits them most, so we don't want to be the narrow minded, controlling people that bring something we claim is truth. We don't want do be judges telling others they're sinners. And it's difficult. As soon as we start a conversation about faith we get questions and arguments thrown at us that are difficult to answer. And just explaining the basics in Christianity can be challenging to a lot of us. Where do we start? What can we say so the people listening see Jesus and not just a system and words? And sharing our faith takes a lot of time. It is hard enough to keep our own Christian lives going, and being part of a church takes time and energy as well. Are we supposed to take care of ourselves, and our families, and meet non-Christians with the Gospel? This seems like too much, thus another reason to not share. But one of the biggest reason Christians do not share is that they do not want to be persecuted for sharing their faith...after all who does right? This is the cultural Christian norm regarding evangelism. Thus, with all of these reasons or excuses, it is really no surprise that so few Christians are actively involved and intentional about evangelism. But again, this is not how the Bible tells us we are to live. The biblical norm is a lifestyle of evangelism. The biblical norm is a life committed to sharing the good news of Jesus. This is the great commission...go out to all the ends of the earth sharing about Jesus (Acts 1:8). The Bible doesn't tell us to go evangelize only if we feel like it and everything else makes it possible. The Bible tells us to go make disciples. Period. So if our cultural norm is to be quiet about our faith, but the biblical norm is to share our faith, how do we go beyond the norm of evangelism?

At first I thought about teaching practical steps on how to share our faith. Which is good, but truthfully I have preached for many years on practical steps and I don't believe that is going to solve our real problem. In other words, I don't think we fail to share the gospel because of a lack of knowledge. Then I thought about how can we eliminate our greatest barrier the fear of persecution, or feeling awkward, and the truth is that we can't. If we share the gospel the Bible teaches us that we will be persecuted. People will look at us like we are crazy, threaten us, and harm us. So is that it...is that a game stopper?

How do we get over that or beyond that fact that we will be persecuted? As I gave that some thought and sought answers from the scriptures I realized that my main challenge and I would adventure to guess the majority of peoples main challenge to over come is not the persecution, but to grow in love that we are willing to sacrifice, to be persecuted, embarrassed, and uncomfortable.

Allow me to explain by reading **Acts 17:16-17**. Here we read that the Apostle Paul arrives in Athens and is grieved and greatly distressed because the city was full of idols so he began to reason with the people in the synagogues and in the marketplace. Why? Why was the Apostle Paul so greatly distressed over all of the idols? Paul wasn't worshipping idols. It wasn't his problem. Why did he care? Why was he so greatly, not slightly, but greatly distressed? We read that he cared so much that he began to preach in the synagogues and in the market place, knowing that this could bring persecution and it did. For certain, Paul was upset that these false idols were offensive to God and an affront to God's truth. But that is not the main reason why the Apostle Paul is so greatly distressed. The Apostle Paul had the heart of Christ and he was so greatly distressed because all of the people were not free but were lost and in bondage. Paul loved God and loved people.

Paul arrives and sees these idols and recognizes them as guards that are keeping the people of Athens in prison. Paul understood that while people often boldly claim that they are free and can do whatever they want, they can sleep with whoever, lie, cheat, and boast of their freedom, when in fact they are slaves to their sin. Paul knew that the gospel is not seeking to place people in bondage but to set people free. When we address sin as sin it is not meant to be an act of tyranny but one of liberty, and freedom in Christ. God is not an ogre who is seeking to limit us, but a God who created us and loves us, so much so that He sent His Son to free us from sin. Jesus reminds us in John 10:10, that He has come to give you life and life abundantly.

God's heart is to bless us and save us. This is why God sent His Son to die for us. The ministry of Jesus is all about God's heart for the lost. Jesus tells numerous parables of God's heart for the lost. We read of the story of the shepherd who has 100 sheep and one is lost, and the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to go find the lost sheep. The same analogy is given in the lost coin, and the story of the prodigal son, who left his home, and the father eagerly awaits for the return of the lost son. In **Luke 19:10**—Jesus boldly states His mission: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”. And this was the heart that the Apostle Paul had and why he was so grieved and upset when he arrived in Athens.

Listen to **Matthew 9:35-36**. Here we see that Jesus went out preaching and proclaiming the Gospel. Jesus was doing just what He has asked us to do. But then look what Matthew 9:36 states, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” It is that compassion and love that are cultural norm of Christianity is missing. We are so consumed with ourselves that we truly are not grieved at the billions of people dying without Christ. Truthfully, one of the greatest barriers to me sharing Christ is that I simply don't care enough about others. That sounds terrible, but it is true. And I do not believe I am alone. Myself and most Christians know that God's heart is for the lost. Most Christians know that. But I care more about my comfort and safety than people in bondage to sin and dying going to hell. I am not greatly grieved like the apostle Paul was

when I walk down Newport Avenue or anywhere in San Diego. I have become numb to all of the idols and the people rejecting Christ. The fact that there are 4.6 billion people dying without Christ does not motivate me to share the gospel as it should. I hate that fact but my actions prove it to be true. And I am not the only one! The norm of our “Christian” culture is we largely do not care about the lost enough to share. We care about ourselves and our own loved ones, this is true. When it was my loved ones and my family that did not know Jesus I was bold and willing to tell them about Jesus regardless of the outcome. Because I loved them and I did not want them to die without having eternity in heaven. So, if I cared about my family that way and was willing to share the truth of the gospel with them even if they rejected me why won't I do that with others? Simple truth: I don't love others the same. I am willing to be persecuted for the love of my family but not the love of strangers. But it will be love that will overcome all of our fears and boundaries. For example, if you are scared you don't know enough information it will be love that will empower you to share what you do know. Or if you are feeling to concerned about offending the person it will be love for that person that will overcome that fear. Or if you feel that you are scared of being too busy or being persecuted it will be the love of Christ that will enable you to overcome that boundary and share Christ. Without love, we will only share Christ if it is easy, convenient and comfortable. The moment it feels neither convenient, easy, or comfortable we largely do not share. That is our cultural norm. The problem is that sharing Christ is almost always uncomfortable, inconvenient, and challenging and therefore we rarely share. Unless, the pastor gives an emotional sermon on evangelism and that causes us to share for a few days and then we are back to the norm. We need to move beyond the cultural norm of self-centered evangelism to biblical sacrificial evangelism, a lifestyle of evangelism motivated not out of guilt but out of love. What we need to do is get God's heart for evangelism, and this is a love for the lost.

God wants our hearts to beat for the people who have never heard a word from the Bible. He wants our hearts to be filled with love and longing for the people we see on the streets, in our work, in our neighborhood. He wants our hearts to break for the young adults that decide to leave the church they grew up in. Because that's what His heart does. That's where it all has to start. The Apostle Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:14**, “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. It was the love of Christ that compelled Paul to evangelize. And it will be the love of Christ that will compel us to move beyond the norm of cultural evangelism to a biblical norm of evangelism.

So the real practical question is how do we get or develop a heart and love for the lost so that we are compelled even in the face of persecution, busyness, and awkwardness to share the gospel? Well there are many practical steps that we can focus on and we have and will but today I want to focus on just one...and that is seeking out God to change our heart through prayer.

Now, it is important that you understand, when I say prayer, I am not talking about checking off a box of simply saying some rote words as we rush out the door, but I am talking about humbling ourselves and sitting in the presence of God desperately seeking His will to transform our hearts into His heart. I am talking about seeking out God's presence recognizing there is no other source to solve our challenge to evangelism. For the truth is that changing one's heart is only something God can do. So in order for us to

develop a heart after God, a heart that cares for the lost, we need to seek out God. We need to daily and hourly seek out God asking Him to transform us into His image, with His heart and mind.

This is why we read in **Romans 12:1-2** to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. No longer being conformed to the pattern of this world but being transformed by the renewing of our mind. It is that transformation of our heart and mind that we are seeking and it only comes when we seek out God with all of our heart and offer up our lives sacrificially to Him. It then goes on to say that this is our spiritual act of worship. It is when we are surrendering our lives unto Christ, allowing Him to mold us into His image that our hearts are transformed. We need to repent and be devoted to prayer for God's will and a change of our hearts. We need to confess that we have been selfish and have been consumed with the American dream instead of God's dream, that we have been concerned with our own agenda and not God's. We need to pray and ask God to give us a heart after His heart. For without the heart of God we will give up. If sharing the love of Christ is not done out of a fierce motivation stemming from the love of Christ for others then we will quit the moment things get difficult. But to get that love we must be touched and transformed by the Holy Spirit and that is fostered through desperately seeking out God through prayer.

So for the next month I want to challenge you to seek out God daily asking Him to give you and cultivate your heart for the lost in 3 ways. The first is to ask God to give you a burden and a love for the lost. The Apostle Paul says in **Romans 10:1** that it is his heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved, so much so that he was even willing to give up his salvation that others may be saved. This is a radical burden and love for the lost. It was this love that motivated Paul to say that he was willing to become all things to all people in order to save some. Paul was not focused on building his kingdom or his version of the "American" dream but fulfilling God's dream and building God's kingdom. But all of this is mere reflection of the love that Christ had, and the same love that we are called to have. Jesus' heart was for the lost. His heart was so much for the lost that He left heaven, took on the role of a servant, and sacrificed His life unto death that He may save those who believe. This is the heart we need to pray for. It is this heart that will motivate us to share regardless of our circumstances.

The next thing I want to challenge you to pray is for a sense of urgency. Read again **Matthew 9:35-38**. Here we see Jesus modeled evangelism, He then shares His motive, that is that His heart is for the lost out of love, He then instructs the disciples to not simply go, which He tells them multiple times, but He tells them to pray. Pray that the Lord of the harvest, that is God, will send out workers. Why, because the harvest is large and the workers are few. God understands the sense of urgency. And so too should we. The Apostle Paul states in **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**, that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others." What the Apostle Paul is saying is that he recognizes that God is a holy and just God and that He will judge sin and that all those who do not have Christ will perish. It is because of this fact that Paul seeks to persuade others. Paul has a sense of urgency knowing that there will be a judgment day.

Most Christians understand and know Christ is necessary for salvation, yet they live their Christianity in silence, as if people around them in the world will indeed be okay in the end without Christ. We practically live life as though Jesus is not the only way...meaning we do not intentionally share the gospel as though people's eternal destinies lie in the balance. The truth is that most Christians don't really think about people's eternal destiny. It is something we do not like to think about. But scripture teaches that Jesus will judge all sin and that anyone who does not have Christ as their Lord and Savior will have to pay for their sin which is eternal separation from God. Too many Christians are ignoring this. Let me ask you, do you believe Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven? Do you believe there is a plan B? If you do believe as John 14:6 declares or Acts 4:12 which states that there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved, then we must have a sense of urgency to share the gospel because billions of people have not heard the good news of Christ. To often I do not act because I do not have a sense of urgency. We need to remember there is an eternity. We need to remember what Jesus did for all of us on the cross. And we need to let that touch our hearts, so we can see the people around us the way Paul did, the way Jesus does: praying and longing that they will be saved. Because God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (**1 Timothy 2:4**). We need to pray and ask God to give us this heart for the lost and a sense of urgency.

That last thing I want to challenge you to pray daily, for the next month, is for open doors and boldness to declare God's truth. Read with me **Colossians 4:2-4**, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." Here we read the Apostle Paul, the expert evangelizer asking for prayer for not only courage, but open doors. We can only assume that the Apostle faced all sorts of fears, the same type of fears and selfishness that we have that prevent us from sharing the gospel. But he did not try to change on his own rather he was dependent upon the Lord to give him a new heart and strength.

Imagine what it would be like if no matter what fear or challenge faced us we were so overwhelmed by God's love that it simply didn't matter. It is not that we want to be scared or persecuted, it is just that our love for others can outweigh our fears, outweigh our selfishness, outweigh all of our concerns. Imagine the impact we can have on building God's kingdom if everyone we encountered we viewed with the love of God. We could truly change the world!

Bottom line, it is only God who can change our selfish hearts. If we are to develop a heart for the lost then we need God to change our hearts for a heart after His, and that is going to begin by turning towards God through repentance and prayer. The repentance part is recognizing and confessing we are selfish and need God to change our hearts. So let us pray every single day, desperately seeking God to give us a heart after His, a heart for the lost. If we continue to seek out God asking Him to give us His heart for the lost according to His will He promises to answer. So whether your life screams evangelism, or you've never talked to anyone about the Gospel, we all have to go to Jesus every day seeking Him to change our hearts. We have to pray for Him to touch, change and fill our hearts so we feel our hearts break when we hear of people and encounter people who have never heard the Gospel.

As we close this morning I want to invite the worship team to come forward and I want us together to spend the next 5-10 minutes in prayer for seeking God's heart for the lost. The same thing I want to challenge you to do for a month. We can't be guilt tripped into sharing Jesus, that won't last. We must have our hearts broken for that which breaks God's heart. We must be devoted to and surrendered to God. So let us begin through prayer.

(10 minutes)

Worship playing: Pastor Joe leading prayer in sanctuary and Julian leading prayer in Venue.

First, let us pray for God to give us His heart and love for the lost. Let us pray that our hearts will break for that which breaks God's heart.

Next, let us pray that we will have a sense urgency to share the love of Christ with the lost. Let us pray that God will remove the blinders from peoples hearts that they may see His love and truth and believe in Him as their Lord and Savior.

Last let us pray that God will give us open doors and courage to share His truth with the people in our lives who are yet to accept Christ. Pray for that 1 person who you have been investing in, that 1 life. Pray that God will give you a burden for them and a special love for them. Pray for their salvation.

Close in Prayer.

## **Scriptures for A Heart for the Loss**

### **Acts 17:16-17**

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. **17** So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

### **Matthew 9:35-36**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. **36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

### **2 Corinthians 5:14**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

### **Romans 10:1**

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

### **Matthew 9:35-38**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. **36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **38** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

### **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. **11** Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others...

### **Colossians 4:2-4**

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **3** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4** Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.



## **Scriptures for 10/19/14**

Acts 17:16-17

Matthew 9:35-36

2 Corinthians 5:14

Romans 10:1

Matthew 9:35-38

2 Corinthians 5:10-11

Colossians 4:2-4