

Sermon Notes
“Evangelism and Missions”

Material for this message was drawn from a series of sermons by Dr. Calvin Wittman (2009)

Focal Scripture Reference: Matthew 28:18-20

From the beginning, Southern Baptists have felt strongly that one of the primary roles of the Church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. However, we, as Southern Baptists are not merely united by our common desire to reach others with the Good News of the Gospel. We are also united in a common doctrinal belief as we have studied over the past several messages.

While Christ’s missionary and disciple making command instruct us about what we are to do, it is the doctrinal foundation undergirding this command that tells us how we are to make disciples. Let’s read Article 11 of the Baptist Faith and Message:

"It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others.

Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ."

There are a number of scriptures that clearly support the content of this article. Perhaps the most recognizable one is what we call “The Great Commission.”

In **Matthew 28:18-20** Jesus says this, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

It is clear that our primary purpose is to expand the Kingdom of God by sharing the message of Christ with others. Whether or not we are reaching others with the gospel of Jesus Christ, then, determines our effectiveness as Christians.

As we consider this truth, allow me to share with you seven things the scripture says with respect to the gospel of Jesus Christ, each of which have a bearing on our responsibility to share what we know with others.

1. The Gospel is Elementary

The Gospel is the simple story of God's love for humanity and His good faith offer to save all who will place their trust in the finished work of Christ on the Cross. One of the most common excuses heard from Believers who are not actively involved in sharing their faith is that they do not feel qualified to do so. But a clear understanding of the scripture reminds us that Jesus Himself taught that the gospel is so simple even a child can understand it.

One of the real reasons people don't share their faith is that they don't have a real faith to share. Listen carefully to this statement: disciples make disciples. People who really know Jesus don't find it that difficult to introduce others to Him. It's just that simple. Look at the early disciples. Not one of them has an extensive theological education.

The disciples simply shared what they knew to be true: Jesus is the Christ; the Son of the living God, and all who ask Him for forgiveness would receive it and be given eternal life. Somewhere along the way, we have complicated sharing the gospel to the degree that it has become convoluted and difficult to understand. Folks, people don't need to understand everything about doctrine in order to place their faith in Christ. All they need is simple childlike faith. You as a Christian do not need to understand everything about doctrine in order to share your faith with a lost person. All you need to be able to share is a simple explanation of what happened to you, how you became a Christian. When the blind man who was healed by Jesus was asked to explain what had happened to him, he said simply, "I was blind but now I see!" That's how simple sharing the gospel is. If you truly know Jesus, you will find it very simple to share Him with others.

2. The Gospel is Exclusive

There is no other way to gain access to God and eternal life except through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In John 14:6 Jesus says, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

This certainly goes against the prevailing belief of many people in our world today, who have accepted the idea that truth is contextual and that all "truths" are of equal worth. This can cause many Christians to find it uncomfortable to share their faith because this claim to exclusivity goes against the grain of our culture, and because so many will take offense to the truth that Jesus Christ is the only way. The exclusivity of the gospel may not be popular, but Jesus tells us that He is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life.

Any message that claims that there is salvation in anyone or anything but Jesus is a lie. God's Word clearly says Jesus is exclusively the only way.

3. The Gospel is Eternal

The Gospel is timeless, it does not change, and it is applicable to all people, at all places at any time. Again, many people living in the world today will claim that there is no truth that is equally true for all people, at all places at any time. But Jesus tells us differently.

Matthew 24:14 says, **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”**

Jesus tells us to take His gospel to all nations, to all places, to the uttermost parts of the world and a gospel that is to be taken to all nations, to the ends of the earth, is a gospel that is applicable to all peoples in all places at any time. Many things have changed in the two thousand years since Jesus ascended into heaven, but don't be fooled – the most important things have stayed the same. People are still born with a sinful nature, they still rebel against their maker and they are still helpless to save themselves.

The message that God loves us and sent His Son to save us has not changed. The methods we employ to share it may have changed, the language we use to communicate it may have changed, the customs surrounding our worship may have changed, but the message is still the same. The gospel of Jesus Christ is eternal; it does not change and is always relevant and applicable to all people.

4. The Gospel is Exacting

The gospel demands everything from those who accept it. We need to understand that believing in Jesus as Savior also means that we commit to surrendering everything to Him as the Lord of lives. Listen to what Jesus says in **Matthew 16:24-26**

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. ²⁶What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

When we share the gospel, we must be careful not to share a watered-down version of the gospel, a gospel that calls for nothing but promises everything. The gospel, as Jesus taught it and as scripture explains it, tells us we are to surrender ourselves, totally and unreservedly to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

5. The Gospel is Enlightening

A critical component of the gospel is to teach others to obey all that Christ commanded. One of the common areas in which we fail as Christians and churches is that we are often more concerned about making converts than making disciples. Jesus did not only call us to get decisions; He also called us to make disciples.

Making disciples involves leading people to a saving knowledge of Christ and growing them through Christian training and mentorship. The activities we have in our church need to be focused on the making of disciples. We need to help non-believers understand the basic claims of Christ. We need to help them come to faith in Jesus. But then we need to disciple them, so that they may grow deeper in their faith. We need to be committed to doing what it takes to make disciples.

6. The Gospel is Effective

The Gospel thoroughly transforms those who truly believe. The person who has truly accepted Christ is a new person, old things have passed away and all things have become new. Jesus tells us that by their fruits we shall know them, and James tells us that faith without evidentiary works; authenticating works, is not real faith.

The reality is, if you are saved, there will be a clear transformation in your life. If there is no change, there is no salvation. Jesus also says that once we are a believer we should bear fruit. That means not only the fruit of new converts, but the fruit of the Spirit as well. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes us from the inside out. It is not merely a moral code we try to obey; it is not merely a set of nice things we should strive to practice in our lives. The gospel is revolutionary, it is transformational, it changes all who truly accept it to be like Jesus.

7. The Gospel Must Be Extended

Those who truly accept Christ will be busy about the business of sharing the gospel with others. We are stewards of the gospel - Something for which each of us will be held accountable. The making of disciples is something God has entrusted to us.

But more than that, it is something He has commanded us to do. It should never be seen as a burden, but rather as a privilege. The scripture says we are messengers, or ambassadors, sent from God to a lost world around us to be messengers of peace and reconciliation. We are to tell them of His love, to invite them to accept His offer of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We are commanded to share it, verbally and visibly in our lives.

So, the question for us is what kind of witnesses are we? When God calls you into account someday, for the stewardship of the gospel He entrusted to you what will you say? Are you faithfully witnessing and personally sharing Christ? Are you actively engaged in discipleship, of others and yourself? If not, you need to be. Each of us needs to be faithful to the commitment we have made to our Savior and Lord.