

PASSION RESCUE – A life of reaching the lost prt 5

Lets recap what we spoke about in the past 3 weeks – we have been developing a thesis around how to make reaching the lost a part and parcel of our lives. We looked at three values that you and I need to live by: Lets go through them together

VALUE #1 – Everyone matters before God

VALUE #2 – People are spiritually lost

VALUE #3 – Jesus is the only savior of the lost

VALUE #4 – People need answers

VALUE #5 – People need community

Value #6 – People need prayer

One of the reasons why people don't open up to the love of Jesus is that we have too many weird Christians who have not been able to rightly represent Jesus.

Have you ever met a weird Christian? This is a believer who can not relate with people in a normal day to day life. They often make people around them feel very uncomfortable. It is quite unfortunate that Christians can be one of the most insensitive and difficult individuals to deal with.

What am I talking about? I am talking about relevance.

Value # 7 – People need cultural relevance

- This is one of the most important aspects of becoming a successful missionary in a foreign land – a missionary is required to clearly communicate the gospel in the context of the culture he has been called to reach.
- It is quite obvious that we need to prepare a foreign missionary in this way and often think that we don't need to do the same.
- What do we assume? We think because we speak the same language, wear the same clothes, we are from the same region, we drive the same cars then there mustn't be any barriers between us.
- We forget that not everyone knows what we know, not everyone values what we value – in actual fact our church world has become a culture unto itself and has become increasingly inward-looking
- Without realizing it we have developed Christian lingo such that anyone who comes around us can barely understand us.

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- We have developed our code of conduct which in most cases they are not biblically based but merely preferences.
- Culture plays a major role in shaping the way people hear and understand our message
 - Language, dress, musical tastes, personal motivators, habits,
- I need to emphasis this – what I am referring to as culture is different from what one would call the world as in the love of the world (1 John 2:15), rather this is in reference to more generic, spiritually neutral aspects of the society.
- Paul referred to these neutral aspects of society in the following scriptures

1Corinthians 9:19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. 20 When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. 21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. 22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. 23 I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

- Paul was so flexible in his outlook to life in order to become relevant to everyone for the sake of reaching the unchurched.
- He made these accommodations in so far as neutral issues were concerned – he was never going to compromise his message in doing this. Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of the missionary purpose - Acts 16:1-3
- Paul is challenging you and I to take the appropriate risks to reach as many people as possible, including those who are different from you.
- Jesus was never far away from those He wanted to reach. He was found among them, He ate with them - *Mark 2:16 (Jesus ate with tax collectors)*
- Jesus was never far away from the people He wanted to reach – it was counter the prevailing religious culture.

To illustrate the point, I am going to use a story found in the book of Acts

- With the rising of persecution in Jerusalem, most disciples left for their own safety and wherever they went, they preached the Gospel
- Phillip was busy preaching in Samaria but at some point the Lord wanted to shift his attention.

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Acts 8:26 As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza."

- On God's timetable, it was time for the gospel to reach other regions.
- The angel gave concise directions and locations of where Philip's ministry was needed. On God's timetable, it was time for another community to receive the good news.
- This tells me something – You have a mission field tailor made for you – it's a matter of location and constituents
- God did not call you and grace you to minister to everyone – do you know whom God is calling you to reach.
 - You live in certain neighbourhood
 - You have access to a specific people
 - Pay attention to your area of influence
- What I find interesting is that when the angel of the Lord told Philip to move, the angel did not exactly tell him what was at the location.
- He had to trust that God was up to something big despite not knowing what was on South Street. The initial step of obedience led to greater works.

Acts 8: 27 So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

- With every little bit of obedience, we are ushered into a greater dimension of our calling. You can't afford to wait to know that there is an Ethiopian on South Street.
- It was only after he had arrived at South Street that he realised that his mission had to do with a man of great influence and authority.

Acts 8:29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." 30 Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

- On arriving in South Street, Philip needed further instructions – he saw the Ethiopian Eunuch but did not know what to do with him.
- Something key happened – THE SPIRIT SAID and PHILIP RAN. Philip needed to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to move closer to being a solution.
- In order to be relevant you need to **Work with the Holy Spirit**
- It is for the Holy Spirit to speak and it is for you to run. When roles are reversed, we are usually out of touch with the felt needs around us.

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- Collaborating with the Holy Spirit will save you a lot of heart aches, disappointments and time wastage.
- Working with the Holy Spirit causes you to see and hear what you would not ordinarily perceive.
Isaiah 30:21 Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left.
- It was only after Philip got close to the chariot that he understood what he was dealing with.
- That was when he realised the real need – In order for you to move to your next level of relevance, get closer to the need – **proximity gives perspective**. In order to save humanity, Jesus had to be born of a woman, had to live like you and I (Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 2:11).
- When you try to deal with issues via the remote control, you usually give the wrong prescription
- The closer you are to the issues, the more relevant the solution you are likely to provide
- The salt is only effective when it is where it is needed – the salt is good for nothing as long as it remains in the salt shaker
- There is a price to be paid in order to smell like the sheep – you have to give up some privileges –
- I don’t know how fast the chariot was going at but Philip had to keep up with it long enough to hear what was being read.

Acts 8: 31 The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

- When people see that you are really interested in them, they will invite you into their lives – they will bring you into their inner circle
- The Ethiopian Eunuch had to see that Philip was genuinely interested in his life before he could invite him into his space. It took some level of trust to invite a stranger into his expensive car.
- Being invited into the chariot did not guarantee a positive outcome, it was not obvious that Philip was going to be successful on his mission.
- Being closely linked with unbelievers does not mean you will automatically win them to Christ – you still need to build bridges
- Philip sustained the conversation with the Eunuch by creating a common ground with him
- Develop a deeper connection by creating a common ground with your environment

*Acts 8: 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, **and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.***

- Philip began his conversation by beginning with where the Eunuch was at – this was a common ground which made it easy for him to break into the life of the man.
- Your message is received better when people feel that you can connect with where they are at.
- Philip chose to be relevant by providing an answer to the question on hand – in the process, he was able to preach Christ.