

Show and Tell
Pastor Joe Oakley
GFC – 5/14/17

Today we are celebrating Mother's Day. One of the things most mothers are known for is their love and I believe people can get a glimpse of God's love through a mother's love. That's because when a mom loves – she displays the love of God.

When a mom protects – she displays the love of a God who protects.
 When a mom comforts – she displays the love of a God who comforts.
 When a mom listens – she displays the love of a God who listens.
 When a mom does these things she is showing the world a portrait of a God who loves them unconditionally. And when Christians do these things – they are showing the world that God is love.

How do you know someone loves you? Because they tell you with their words and show you with their actions.

I'm preaching today a sermon entitled Show and Tell. How many of you remember having show and tell time at school? I remember being in the third grade – sitting in circle – I didn't have anything to share so I made something up. I said I went on an airplane ride with my dad. That part was true and everybody believed that – but I kept going and the story got out of hand. I said we went up in the clouds and I opened the window and the clouds came inside the plane and we couldn't see and almost crashed. That's where I lost them.

I learned that day why they call it Show and Tell – I was telling without showing and nobody was buying. I learned my lesson, and when I got into the fourth grade, I gave it another shot. I talked about how my grandfather was a sheriff in Tennessee. This time I had proof – his badge. This time everyone believed me because I was showing and telling. One of the problems with Christians today is that many are telling without showing!

Show and tell is a pattern of ministry seen all through the Bible. People believed in Jesus because He showed and He told. Matthew 4:23 says:

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

The book of Acts begins by talking about *all that Jesus began to do and to teach...*

The Bible is the record of what Jesus did and taught. His 2-fold pattern of ministry involved demonstration and proclamation. This was also true of His disciples. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:5:

Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

Sharing our faith involves proclamation and demonstration.
 We've got to proclaim God's goodness and demonstrate God's goodness.
 We've got to proclaim God's power and demonstrate God's power.
 We've got to proclaim God's love and demonstrate God's love.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We've got to be the good news and live the good news (demonstration) in order to earn the right to tell the good news (proclamation).

Good works provide an opportunity to share Good news! That's what Jesus did. He was called the friend of sinners. He loved everyone right where they were. He loves us right where we are and He wants to love others through us. This kind of love is how we share our faith with others. Galatians 5:6 says:

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

As 1 Corinthians 13 says, if we talk about our faith, but we don't have love, we're just a clanging cymbal! Our lives must show something to people that attracts them before they will hear us. Colossians 3:17 says:

Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus.

Notice it says, "do or say." That means we need to be audiovisual Christians who walk the walk and talk the talk. We communicate it and we demonstrate it. We are show and tell Christians who live it in our lives and share it with our mouths. And the Bible is very specific about how we should live. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 says:

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

God tells us to live life in a way that gains other people's respect! Our lives must show something to people that attracts them before they will hear us. Are you showing and telling? Are you living a life before others that is attracting them to Christ?

The point is we can tell people we are Christians all day long. We can read our Bibles and pray and argue doctrine – but that means nothing to unbelievers. Few people have been argued into the kingdom of God.

People of the world judge Christianity, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of Jesus and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily lives and conversation of the members of the church.

We may be very devout church goers - regular at prayer-meetings - even tithers - but all these are of little worth in the eyes of the world, unless accompanied by a life of integrity and good works!

We witness through our lives first, our words second. Most people are drawn to a Christian before they are drawn to Christ. What draws them? They must see something different in us. We can talk about our faith all day long, but James 2:18 says

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

People need to hear about our faith, but they need to see our faith in action! They need to see us going through the same issues in life and in school and at work as they go through – but we go through them differently! We have joy in our hearts and peace of mind and hope for the future. At some point, they will ask you about that. And 1 Peter 3:15-16 says:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

In other words, live a life that is above reproach so that there is no cause for accusations – only cause for questions about how you live such a hopeful life. Then we have the opportunity to share our faith with them.

That's why St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words!" Although words are a necessary part of evangelism, we can all stand a little improvement in the area of communicating love through our lives. Sometimes our life is so loud people can't hear our words.

You see, every Christian is a witness, whether they want to be or not. What is your life preaching? I like to ask this question, "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

The world needs to see God for who He really is. And one of the ways they see Him is through Christians. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says:

God reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of reconnection. Sin disconnects people from God, but Jesus died so that all people can be forgiven of their sins and reconnected to God. That's the good news! But people don't know that unless we tell them.

People believed in Jesus because what He said and what He did. Now – they either believe or don't believe based on what we say and do! 1 John 4:17 says:

Love has been perfected in us, because as He is, so are we in this world.

You're the only Jesus some people will ever see. That's why how we live is important. But so is what we say. Christians need to give a verbal witness that accompanies a Christian lifestyle. We can tell the good news by sharing our experience with God - that which we have seen and heard.

In Acts 4:20, Peter and John were talking to the religious leaders who were trying to get them to stop preaching Christ. Peter and John replied:

...we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

What have you seen and heard? What have you personally experienced? What has God done for you? That's what you witness to.

Once you tell your story – all you need to know to lead someone to faith is Christ is the ABC's.

A – Admit
B – Believe
C – Confess

We get the ABC's from 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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

The ABC's are all you need to know - Admit you need a Savior, Believe in your heart that Christ died for your sins and rose from the dead, and Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

We need to realize that not everyone is ready at any given moment to be born again. Some plant seeds - Others water it - others reap – God gives the growth. Be persistent!

We prayed and witnessed to Deb's sister for 25 years before she accepted Christ as her Savior!

We've got to do our part – no matter how small it seems. What can we do? I'm going to tell you four things you can do and I'm going to help you remember those four things by telling you one of the names I was called as a kid? Here's a hint. Glasses. That's right. Four eyes.

We're going to talk today about 4 "I"s. 4 things we each can do to make a difference.

1- IDENTIFY – Who in the world can you reach?

God specifically put people in your life, and you are God's representative to them. And if not you, who? God put you there. Why would he put you there? He put you there to share the good news. How will the people know about Jesus unless we tell them?

I saw a t-shirt that said Friends Don't Let Friends Go To Hell. In other words, we should be influencing those closest to us for Christ because we care about them the most. Friendship evangelism was one of the main ways the gospel spread in the New Testament and it's still the main way today! Identify the people you can reach and pray for opportunities to reach out to them.

2- INTERCEDE –

Even though we are unable to meet every need we come across, what can we do for every need we come across? We can the greatest thing anyone can do for another: pray for them.

Think of people in need and begin praying for them. Tell them you're praying for them. Most people are very open to prayer. If the spirit leads you and the person agrees, actually pray out loud for them. If not, just tell them you'll be praying. Then pray. Then follow up.

3- INVEST – What can you sow into their lives?

What else can we invest in people's lives other than prayer? One of the most precious things to people today is time. So, it speaks volumes when we give them our time because they know the cost. We need to care enough to invest in people by spending time with them.

It's only as we truly care about those around us that we can reach them for Christ. Before learning any scriptures or witnessing techniques, being a witness is about caring. When they know we care – then they'll let us share! The way we live can give us an open door into people lives or it can slam the door. Our life can get us an opportunity with people.

When we have that opportunity, we need to care enough to share the good news.

4- INVITE

To the Lord – Go and Tell

To the Church – Come and See

Barna Research reveals that only 25% of the population has been invited to church. 15% of the uninvited say they would accept an invitation from anybody. 65% will say yes if invited by someone they know!

Unfortunately, the Church appears to be missing this important truth, because a recent Gallup poll showed that 63% of unchurched Americans have not been invited to church by their friends.

Philip brought Nathaniel to Christ by inviting him to come and see the Messiah for himself. We can invite seekers to do the same by creating an experience in our worship services where people encounter God. That's why it's so important that we all participate and enter in.

You don't have to be a great evangelist to be effective. God searches for those who care enough to invest prayer and share. He will do the rest through the power and truth of the gospel.

If you want to be like Jesus, you must care about what He cares about and do what He did about it. 1 John 3:18 says:

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

In other words – Show and Tell!

You don't have to be a biblical scholar to tell someone about Jesus. You are called to be a witness. What does a witness do? Tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what they have personally experienced.

What have you seen and heard? What have you experienced? What has God done for you? That's what you witness to.

By the way, I want to take the pressure off you to convert people. We are called to be witnesses, not to convert, save or change hearts. That is God's job. When we do our part, God will do His part. Our part is to witness about what God has done for us. His part is to save.

Before we can witness, we must be a witness. This means that witnessing includes the way we live as well as the things we say. You see, every Christian is a witness, whether they want to be or not. You are a walking talking living breathing advertisement for Christ.

What is your life preaching? The way you live can give you an open door to share the good news with people. At that point, you must have something to share! You must have some good news. You don't have to have a degree in theology – just some good news! You don't have to know the answer to every question – you just need to know what Jesus has done for you!

There was a man in the Bible who was healed by Jesus. The theologians asked him some difficult questions, but the man said this in John 9:25 – I don't know all the answers:

But I know one thing for sure: I was blind, but now I can see.

You see – someone with an experience is never at the mercy of someone with an argument. When someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, just say, "I don't know, but what I do know is what Jesus did for me!"

I believe that all of us need to get our stories down to one sentence to share with others. Share your story! What's Jesus done for you?

Has Jesus done anything for anyone here this morning? Can you say:

Once I had nothing to show or tell, but now my life is changed!

Once I was blind, but now I see!

Once I was lost, but now I'm saved!

Once I had no purpose in life, but now I now I know my destiny!

Once I was headed straight for hell, but now I'm on my way to heaven!

Once I was sick, but now I'm healed!

Once I was empty, but now I am full!

Once I was addicted, but now I'm sober!

Once I was depressed, but now I'm happy!

Once I was full of fear, but now I am full of faith!

Once I was lonely, but now I'm part of the family of God!

Once I was defeated, but now I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ my Lord!

Once I wanted to die, but now I a reason to live because I have abundant life in Christ!

Do you have anything to show? Anything to tell?

Anything to praise the Lord for?

So let me ask you, who are you praying for, believing for, investing in, inviting in?

I am asking you today for commitment. Commitment to pray – for individuals and for the community.

May there be many in heaven because of the investment and efforts of the family at Grace Fellowship Church.