

Pt 7 – OUTREACH – Bursting the Bubble

At the commencement of this series we declared that the church is the *‘hope of the world.’* We define church as *“a community of Christ-followers empowered by the Spirit to participate in God’s mission in the world.”*

As a Church we desire to be *a God honouring Christian community, who passionately obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.*

We are commissioned to go and to spread the message of hope to those who are far away from God so they can find their way back to God.

Evangelism simply means to *“communicate the message of the good news about Jesus and what He has done for humanity.”*

Christians retreat to one of three positions when their attempt to evangelise fails and their confidence drops.

1- Avoid outsiders

If people ask about my faith well....maybe I will share a little, but I ain’t going to advertise it!

2- Stick with insiders

Only invest time with other Christ followers – those who understand me and the Christian lingo.

3- Retreat into the Christian Bubble.

From within the *‘Christian bubble’* we build a new culture and society where everything is *‘Christianized.’*

This mindset causes us to live in the safe Christian bubble, while the rest of the world is drowning in their hopelessness.

This is definitely not the path and model Jesus followed when He was on earth! If nothing else, it could be said that Jesus was a friend of sinners.

How did Jesus interact with the culture and society of His day and what approach did Jesus take to spread the influence of His Father’s love.

Mark 2:15-17 (niv)

Jesus saw it essential to His mission to spread the influence of His Fathers kingdom to those who were far away from God.

This is why Jesus intentionally created relationships with the outsiders that were broken, ignorant and entrapped in darkness.

Another example of Jesus intentionally spending time with a sinner is found in **Luke 19:1-10** (niv)

Now the scandal of this, is that, in the Jewish culture the tax collectors, whom Zacchaeus was, were known as – scum!

But Jesus picks this fella Zacchaeus out of the crowd and invites Himself over to his place for a leaven bread olive and pomegranate sandwich.

Salvation came to Zacchaeus’ house and then Jesus again reinforces His Mission in **vs 10** *The son of Man, has come to seek and save the lost.*

In other words, Jesus wasn’t sent to live in the religious bubble!

Jesus in effect says I am here to go beyond the bubble, to burst the bubble and to invest intentionally into relationships with those outside of God- even those who society rejects!

The Samaritan woman at the well in **John 4**

Jesus goes out of His way to connect with this totally marginalised woman who was on the fringe of society and Jesus treats her with respect and He bores down into the deep issues of her life.

This woman, probably for the first time in her life felt what it was to be respected and accepted - see **John 4:29**.

When non Christians feel radically sort after and accepted they respond to genuine attempts of interest.

When we the church purposely follow the pattern of Jesus.

Which is to take time to invest in building strategic relationships with people who are in desperate need and who are far away from God.

Jesus was purposeful and intentional in crossing the cultural and religious boundaries to engage with irreligious sinners.

Luke 15:1-2 (niv)

If you shared a table in ancient time Jewish culture it meant – I’m your friend and we have a good connection where there is trust.

We are to pursue the transformation of the human heart of those far away from God, by taking them Jesus’ message of faith, hope and love.

But how?

In **Luke 10:1-12**, we have an outline of some practical instructions Jesus gave His disciples as He sent them out to reach their local communities that we can embrace as well.

1. Be a Blessing to People in your Community

“*May God’s peace be on this house!*” (**vs 5-6**) The disciples were to be and to bring a blessing to the people they were reaching out to.

The Gospel is meant to be good news. We are to seek peace and blessing for all people. We are to seek good for them. (**John 3:16-17**).

2. Build Relationships with People

Jesus then told His disciples to eat and drink together with the people they were reaching out to. (**vs 7-8**)

Jesus Himself was described as a “*friend of sinners*” (**Matthew 11:19**).

As Christ’s followers we are to be relatable to people in our world.

We need to be different, but not weird – able to relate to people in our culture in a meaningful way (see **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**).

3. Meet People’s Needs

Jesus goes on to tell His disciples that as they are building these relationships, they should then look to meet any needs that are there. For instance, He tells them to ‘*heal the sick*’. (**vs 9a**)

Remember, Jesus went about ‘*doing good and healed*’ (**Acts 10:38**).

We are to demonstrate God’s love in practical ways, with ‘*no strings attached*’. Find a need and meet it (**Luke 10:25-37**).

4. Share the Good News about Jesus

Only after meeting the immediate needs does Jesus then instruct his disciples to preach the gospel (**vs 9b**)

For Jesus, steps 1-3 precede the actual preaching of the gospel.

Pre-evangelism is important. It is easy to reverse the order by starting to preach before we even have earned the right to be heard and gained an audience.

However, we should also move beyond simply building relationships and helping people, to seek to talk about what is most important – their spiritual condition and their relationship with God.