

## I. Introduction

- A. Somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about Jesus. Somebody prayed for you. Somebody answered your questions. Somebody explained to you the gospel:
  1. How a man from heaven was nailed to a Cross.
  2. How He took our sins.
  3. How a holy God made Him the propitiation—the satisfactory sacrifice—for the sin of the whole world.
  4. And that your life with God is not established on the basis of your own performance.
  5. But that it is a gift, grounded and rooted in the saving work and moral performance of Jesus Christ.
- B. Somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about Jesus. And that somebody made all the difference for you. They didn't just alter your life on earth; they altered your eternal destiny.
- C. Somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about Jesus.

## II. Jesus said

- A. *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10, NKJV).*
  1. That was His mission.
- B. Then He said,
  1. *"So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (John 20:21, NKJV).*
- C. Jesus made His mission your mission.
- D. He made seeking and saving lost people—His mission—into seeking and saving lost people—your mission.
- E. The Bible has many commissions, but there's only one that's called the Great Commission. Here it is:
  1. *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'" (Mark 16:15, NKJV).*
  2. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NKJV).*
- F. Did the earliest Christians really get it? Let's see.

## III. Polycarp

- A. One of the earliest pastors after the days of Jesus and the apostles was a man named Polycarp. He was a leading pastor in what today we call Turkey. Polycarp led a growing thriving church. One of the great things about his church was that he blended together slaves, aristocrats and even politicians in his ministry.
- B. He lived from the year 70 to the year 156 AD.
- C. This man was so good at converting people from paganism and idols to Jesus Christ that his enemies labeled him ATHEIST. They just couldn't understand people who worshipped a God they couldn't see.
- D. Polycarp was discipled by John who was discipled by Jesus. He had a great ministry for 50 years, until around the year 156 AD. That's when persecution broke out. Local authorities decided to kill a few Christians.
- E. Polycarp was arrested. He was 86 years old—and dragged into a crowded stadium.
- F. The officials didn't want to kill him, so they gave him a way out. They told him all he had to do was to say, "Caesar is Lord," and offer him some incense, and they would let Polycarp go free.
- G. Polycarp refused. The crowds shouted for his death.
- H. The officials pleaded with the old man. They said, "Have respect for your age. Swear by the divinity of Caesar; repent and say, 'Away with the atheists.' Swear to Caesar and I will release you."
- I. Polycarp's words have been recorded by a church historian named Eusebius.
  1. Polycarp looked toward the crowd in the stadium, waved his hand toward them and cried out, "Away with the godless."
  2. The Roman proconsul begged him. "Swear and I will set you free. Curse Jesus Christ and live."
  3. Polycarp answered: "For eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"
  4. "You will be burned," said the proconsul.
  5. Polycarp answered, "The fire you threaten burns for a time and is soon extinguished; there is a fire you know nothing about—the fire of the judgment to come and of eternal punishment. Why do you hesitate? Do what you will."
- J. The proconsul sent a herald to announce three times, "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian!"
- K. The crowds rushed with logs and twigs and straw, and built a fire around Polycarp. When he had prayed, they lit the fire, and burned him alive.
- L. His death boomeranged, however, and became a victory for Christianity. Many leading people of that town came to faith in Christ because of Polycarp's courage in the face of martyrdom.
- M. One of the early church leaders declared, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."
  1. St Paul said he would gladly "spend and be spent" for the gospel (2 Cor. 12:15).
  2. These were men who were fully alive. They might have been frightened and they might have been sad, but I promise you they were not bored.

## IV. Patrick

- A. We're going to fast forward to the year 389 AD. In that year a boy was born in Britain; they named him Patrick. His father and grandfather were both active in the Celtic church. It might surprise you to know that St Patrick was not Irish and he was not Catholic.

- B. When he was a teenager, a band of pirates plundered his village and took Patrick and many other young men captives. They traveled to Ireland and were sold into slavery.
  - C. For the next six years, Patrick herded swine as a slave. Although he was reared in a Christian home, he had never embraced Jesus for himself. But during those years of captivity, he realized that he was a sinner and Jesus was the Savior. Patrick put his faith in Christ and was born again.
  - D. Shortly after that, Patrick escaped from slavery and traveled back to his hometown. His relatives were happy to have him back, but Patrick himself was not happy.
  - E. He had a burden he couldn't shake for the people of Ireland who had no clue about the gospel of Jesus.
  - F. Patrick entered seminary to prepare to be a missionary. His family fought him. They were wealthy. Patrick should stay at home.
  - G. He turned his back on his money.
  - H. In the year 432 AD, Patrick returned to Ireland, the land that held him as a slave. The people there worshipped the sun, moon, wind, water, fire, and rocks. They believed in spirits that inhabited the trees and hills. They practiced magic and sacrifice—including human sacrifice—to placate the angry gods. They did the rites and rituals of the druids and shamans and pagan priests.
  - I. Patrick preached the gospel, organized churches, and moved on to places that had never before heard of Jesus. He single-handedly brought the message of Christ to the whole nation. When people came to Christ, they were given intensive training in the Scriptures and encouraged to become involved in the ministry themselves.
  - J. Twelve times he barely escaped murder. One time, he narrowly escaped being kidnapped.
  - K. Yet, for 30 years, Patrick of Ireland gladly spent and was spent for the gospel. He planted over 200 churches, and baptized over 100,000 converts from dead paganism into the family of the living God—faith alone in Christ alone.
  - L. As his dying words, Patrick wrote these words:
    - 1. Patrick, the sinner—an unlearned man to be sure, that none should ever say that it was my ignorance that accomplished any small thing which I did or showed in accordance with God's will; but judge thus, and let it be most truly believed, that it was the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die.
  - M. Have you ever found a cause worth giving yourself to, body, soul, and spirit? Have you ever found a mission worth living for, and mission worth dying for?
  - N. See, we are all spending and being spent for something. What is your something? What do you have to show for all the work of your hands? Where is the fruit of your labors? Are you proud of it? Will it stand the test of time and eternity?
- V. Others...
- A. In the 1300's John Hus preached the gospel in the language of his own people in Prague. This was unheard of—church was conducted in Latin, and the people didn't need to understand the message of the Cross. The church ordered him to return to Latin. He refused. They condemned John Hus and burned him at the stake.
  - B. In 1812, Adoniram Judson and his wife became missionaries to Burma, now called Myanmar. He was accused of being a British spy, and thrown in prison for twenty-one months of torture and abuse. Through his wife's efforts, Judson was released from prison, and translated the first Bible into the Burmese language in 1834. When he died in 1850, there were 200,000 Christians in Burma.
  - C. In 1366 John Wycliffe was a highly educated doctor of theology at Oxford. He fought the bad news of salvation by the payment of a price. He taught salvation by grace through faith. For this, the pope condemned him on nineteen different charges concerning his writings. Wycliffe translated the Bible into the first English translation ever, making its message available to ordinary people. Those who could read were able to tell other people what the Bible actually said. He died of natural causes, but forty years after his death, John Wycliffe's bones were dug up and burnt by order of angry church leaders.
  - D. William Carey became a Baptist minister in England but his thoughts were on missionary work in India. He longed to bring the gospel to India, but when he tried to persuade church leaders to send him, one of the leaders stood up and said, "Young man, if the Lord wants to save the heathens in India, He will do it without your help." It's that kind of thinking that keeps millions locked in spiritual darkness around the globe. When Carey finally arrived in India, his wife died and some of his children died, but he never quit. William Carey translated the whole Bible into five Indian languages and parts of it into thirty more languages. Christian converts spread throughout India, and Carey became the father of modern world missions.
  - E. Robert Moffatt became a trailblazing missionary to Africa, when the dark continent had no maps, and vast stretches of the interior of the continent were labeled on maps with the words, "unknown." In a trip to Britain, Moffatt pleaded for missionaries to come to Africa where millions were perishing without Jesus. In one of those talks, Moffatt said, "I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been."
  - F. David Livingstone had just completed his medical training, and he heard Moffatt speak those words. He dedicated his life, his family, his money, and his health for forty-three years to Africa. Livingstone trekked across the continent four times on foot, preached the gospel, fought the slave trade, administered medical care, and mapped out the continent for future generations of missionaries. He died on his knees next to his bed, praying for the people he loved so well.
  - G. In 1912, a pastor/evangelist named A.B. Simpson led a disillusioned man to the Lord. That man's name was Paul Rader.
  - H. Paul Rader went on to become a pastor/evangelist himself, in Chicago. He conducted a crusade less than a mile from Wrigley Field. The Chicago Gospel Tabernacle seated 5000 people, and held services six nights a week. The plan was to preach for six weeks, and shut down. The ministry ended up running, not for six weeks, but for eleven years. Rader

became the second president of our family of churches, the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Thousands of people met Jesus in that Jazz era of evangelism through the preaching of Paul Rader.

- I. Paul Rader laid hands on a young musical genius named Lance Latham and made Latham his musical director. Latham apprenticed under Rader. He led jazzy worship, organized choirs, and helped pack out the massive auditorium with soaring music night after night. He later went on to plant a church and to create the kids clubs that spread around the world as the Awana Youth Association.
- J. Rader commissioned Latham, and Latham commissioned a young pastor named Dick Sisson, who led thriving ministries in Chicago and Wisconsin.
- K. And Dick Sisson found a young kid in Chicago named Bill Giovannetti and commissioned me into the gospel ministry as part of my ordination council.

#### VI. What am I saying?

- A. What am I saying? I'm saying that we're all here because somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about Jesus.
- B. That is the story of how the followers of a lowly carpenter turned the world upside down.
- C. When I was in seminary, I spent one year in an urban masters program in Chicago. That year was tough on me. Mainly because the people I was with didn't really believe like me. I had a very conservative theology and most of my classmates and teachers had a very liberal theology. I studied radical feminism, and liberation theology, and even had a class in black church history and theology with Professor Dr. Jeremiah Wright. In this year of my studies, many students believed that all roads lead to God. Some did not believe that Jesus was the only way. Some did not believe in heaven. They thought the good news meant us transforming society here and now; never mind what happens after you die. The church exists to make a better world, not to get people saved. It was to feed people, house the homeless, and heal the wounds of injustice. All good things, but the missing element was preaching Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- D. I was immersed in this teaching, and it really played with my mind. I knew what I believed, but now my faith was being refined by fire. I was so twisted around, that I intentionally parked my car in downtown Chicago so that when I walked to my liberal classes, I would have to walk across the campus of the very conservative Moody Bible Institute on my way to school and on my way back home again.
- E. Many months into this urban program, we did a field trip to a famous church in a neighborhood called Uptown. Uptown was not a nice neighborhood. It was known for poverty, homelessness, crime, and a bunch of mentally ill people wandering the streets. One church there had a fantastic ministry: they fed the hungry, they housed the homeless, and they clothed the naked. They did all the social ministries our school wanted done.
- F. I'll never forget meeting with that pastor on that field trip. Here I am, a young, impressionable seminary student getting all messed up in my theology. And here is this veteran urban church leader, Pastor Jim Queen—respected. Getting things done.
  - 1. Jim Queen walked into our class and said these words: "I don't care how many hungry people you feed. I don't care how many homeless people you shelter. I don't care how many naked people you clothe. If you're not getting people saved, you're not Christian."
- G. I wanted to cheer. That was a turning point in my life. Those words helped define me.
- H. And so, can I stand here today, and say the same thing? Dear Church, no matter how much good we do in the name of Jesus, if we're not getting people saved, we're not Christian!
- I. Jesus told us, "Go preach the gospel and go make disciples." The good things we do buy credibility for the gospel we preach, but getting people saved is, was, and always will be the goal. So many churches have given up on evangelism. They've gone soft on the uniqueness of Christ, they've forgotten the saving work of the Cross, and they've neglected the absolute necessity of saving faith.

#### VII. St Peter preached:

- A. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NKJV).*
  - 1. Notice—salvation is found in no other person than Jesus.
  - 2. There is no other name but Jesus.
  - 3. And we must be saved. Not "it would be nice." Or "I hope you do this." It's a need. It's a necessity.
- B. The church is the hope of the world. When we do our job, people get saved and the world gets fixed.
- C. Neighborhood Church exists to proclaim Jesus Christ, to transform lives, and to go into every neighborhood in Shasta County with the gospel.
- D. That is why we give. That is why we spend. That is why we are spent for the gospel.

#### VIII. St Paul asked:

- A. *"Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:13-15, NKJV).*
- B. If you turn that around you get:
  - 1. Sending >> preaching >> hearing >> believing >> salvation
- C. If you took the top twenty gospel preaching churches in Shasta County, and filled every one to full on Sunday morning, you'd have about 15,000 people in church. If you doubled up their services so that every seat was full twice, you'd have 30,000 people in church on a Sunday, and that's being generous.

- D. Even at those numbers, you'd still have 70,000 unchurched people every week in our community. If half this town were born again Christians, 50,000 people would still be lost in their sins.
    - 1. Redding is a mission field.
    - 2. Redding needs the gospel.
    - 3. Our neighbors need to be saved.
  - E. Jesus found people who wanted to huddle. He shoved us out of the huddle and said, "Go." Go into a classroom that isn't interested. Go into a subdivision that doesn't really care. Go into an office full of people too busy for God. Go into all your places with the love of a Savior who shed His blood for the sins of His people and all who will believe.
  - F. Go tell the story of Jesus. Compel them to come in.
- IX. Maybe you're one of those people.
- A. Maybe somebody has tried to witness to you. Maybe it felt awkward. Or maybe it felt pushy or weird. Please understand this: if we believe that Jesus is the only way to God for time and eternity, and if we're being consistent with our faith, shouldn't we tell you about Jesus? Shouldn't we bend over backwards to make sure the whole world knows?
  - B. Last weekend, over forty-five people said they made professions of faith in Jesus Christ. Forty-five new members of the household of faith. Forty-five lives changed. Forty-five mansions in heaven.
  - C. Afterwards, I was in the lobby and a gentleman came to me—he pointed over at a young man holding his New Believer's Bible—with tears in his eyes, he said, "For 20 years I've prayed for my son to meet Jesus, and today, God answered that prayer—today he was saved."
  - D. That is why we preach. That is why we do small groups. That is why we have youth groups and Awana. That is why we do children's ministry, why we pray, why we support missionaries, why we sing and worship, and why we do everything we do.
  - E. And when that offering plate passes by, that is why we give.
    - 1. He made me—and so I give Him back what already belongs to Him.
    - 2. He saved me—and so I give sacrificially to say thank you for His amazing grace.
    - 3. He sent me—and so I give for the glorious mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ everywhere we can.
      - a) "Now if you believe that outside of Christ there is no hope, it is impossible to possess an atom of human love and kindness without being gripped with a great desire to bring men to this one way of salvation."  
(Michael Green)
- X. Somehow...
- A. You are here today because somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about Jesus Christ. Somebody sacrificed for you. Somebody loved you. Somebody gave so you could hear.
  - B. What have you given?
  - C. What have you sacrificed?
  - D. What have you done without?
  - E. Generations have sacrificed for your salvation.
  - F. Now, it's your turn.