

There is a word that we don't like to use in the church. Many people are uncomfortable when the word is used, especially when the pastor uses it in a sermon. The word strikes fear in the hearts and minds of Christians and strange enough it also has a similar effect on those outside the church.

Most church people hear the word and cringe at the idea that it has anything to do with them. For a majority of those people they figure the reason they pay the pastor is to avoid having any accountability for the word.

And the word makes most church people uncomfortable because they could never imagine themselves living out the word. Sure they believe that the word is important, but just not that important for them. The word is someone else's responsibility.

And we've all seen the pushy, obnoxious individual who lives the word in a very outward and extreme style. That style just doesn't fit into our personality; after all I don't want to offend my friends. So, we abandon the word without even considering that maybe there is a different approach to the word.

And one more thing; most disciples imagine that the word requires some special abilities or knowledge which they could never possess so why even bring up the word.

So this morning I'm not even going to mention the word because if I do most of you will shut down and begin thinking about another word- like lunch or football!

May I ask you this morning to read the words that up here on the screen? These are Jesus words to the disciples in the final chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

"Go and make disciples." Matthew 28:19

Many of us know these words as part of the Great Commission. These words are the purpose for which the church, and each of us as disciples, exists.

Here at Linglestown Life we believe that we make disciples through our mission statement: Love God Love Others!

But what goes in to living out our mission to love God love others? That was a question that we as a staff put into words a while back. What we came up with after several hours of discussion was a vision of how we love God and love others. I shared this statement with you back at the beginning of the summer; see if you remember any of this:

We are a missional people that:

- Live our faith beyond Sundays;
- Connect with people outside our church;
- Build relationships that allow others to explore faith; and
- Encourage people to grow as disciples of Jesus.

This statement actually describes the unmentioned word; but it does so in ways that most of us would never relate to the word. But let's put the statement into some biblical context so that we can unpack these thoughts.

Do you recall the story of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at a well? The story is in John 4. Jesus stops in Samaria; a place where no self-respecting Jew of that day would ever find himself. But Jesus was no ordinary Jewish rabbi. What was ordinary about Jesus was the fact that he got tired, was hungry, needed something to drink and never missed an opportunity that was right in front of him.

So while Jesus sat down alongside the well waiting for lunch; a woman came to the well to fetch water. Here's an important part of the story, so don't miss it. The woman came at the hottest time of the day and all by herself. That tells us that she was not well liked by the other women of her village.

What ensues from here on is a conversation. The conversation is practical, it's pointed and in the end it leaves this Samaritan woman changed. Go home and reread the conversation this afternoon. But I want you to listen to the outcome of that conversation.

John 4:39-42

So how does this story relate to the vision statement? And what does it have to do with the word no one likes to hear? Let's look at each line.

- Live our faith beyond Sundays;

Notice that Jesus didn't strike up this conversation in the synagogue and it wasn't on the Sabbath. Jesus was at the local neighborhood watering hole just having a conversation. And the conversation didn't start over anything spiritual.

As disciples of Jesus we're just like Jesus in that we have everyday activities that take us to everyday places conversing with everyday people. Understand that wherever we go we carry our faith along with us. Your faith isn't just something you pick up and carry to church on Sunday; you take it with you everywhere you go.

As such every disciple of Jesus lives their faith beyond Sunday. The only question is how do you live it? Do you let it impact your life? Do you let it inform your day and speak into your life? Or do you put your faith in park until Sunday or whenever you need it? Disciples of Jesus recognize that faith isn't just a Sunday thing. Faith is integrated into every aspect of your daily life.

- Connect with people outside our church;

Now look at this next phrase. Jesus was talking to someone outside the normal group of disciples he hung around with all the time. That is one of the fascinating things about Jesus; he was always connecting with people outside the comfortable confines of his bubble.

Some Christians live in what we call the Christian bubble. Our friends are people from church, the things we do are with people from the church and of course we spend most Sundays IN church. This Christian bubble is especially a reality for pastors. We rub shoulders almost exclusively with people in the church.

But think about the people you rub shoulders with every day. Are they part of the bubble or are they outside the bubble? I hope they are outside the bubble. And the reason I hope that is the case because then you are already fulfilling this part of the vision. If you are trapped in the bubble then it's time to get out!

Every one of those connections that you have with people is an opportunity to... oops I almost said that word! Let's jump to the next statement.

- Build relationships that allow others to explore faith;

Jesus relationship with the woman at the well, short as it was, eventually turned to a faith issue. And her discovery of the truth which she found in Jesus in turn led her to other faith conversations with the people in her village.

I believe that every relationship you have at some point or another turns to or provides an opportunity for a faith discussion. Now most of us get uncomfortable about this because we aren't Jesus or the pastor and we don't think we have all the answers. (I want to let you in on a little secret: I don't know all the answers either!)

But you know, those conversations have nothing to do with the answers! The most important point is just having the conversation! And once the conversation starts it becomes an avenue to explore faith. And what you may discover is that the person who explores their faith the most might be you not just the person who asked the question.

Allowing someone to explore their faith isn't a once and done event. Too many people who avoid 'the word' think that it is a singular event. But the truth is that more times than not it is a process; a process that may take weeks, months, even years! And that leads to the final point.

- Encourage people to grow as disciples of Jesus.

After the woman at the well was changed by her conversation with Jesus, she had additional conversations with people in her village. And those people eventually came to Jesus, learned from him and in turn became disciples.

And I bet that they lived their faith beyond Sunday, connected with people, built relationships and encouraged others to grow as disciples of Jesus.

So what does all this mean for us?

What it means for each of us as disciples of Jesus is that we need to engage our faith in our normal everyday rhythms of life as we meet new people and grow relationships. It means that you and I need to prayerfully watch and listen to the leading of God (Just what we will be learning in Experiencing God). And it means that we do not need to worry about or be afraid to share our faith within the context of our relationships. After all it's our own personal story that others can relate to that matters most.

Jesus conversation with one woman at the well changed a village. Think about what one of your conversations could change? A life. A family. A community. Maybe even the world.

Jesus called his disciples to make disciples. He called them to evangelize! And you and I are here today because they did it. They didn't just believe it, they lived it! They watched how Jesus lived everyday- making himself available; how Jesus connected with people in ordinary places; how Jesus built relationships that allowed people to explore their faith at their own pace; and how Jesus encouraged them to grow and by joining in the greatest adventure- following Him.

Let's not be afraid of the e-word anymore! Let's take the initiative to live, connect, build and encourage!

I Believe in God, But...

November 6, 2011

"Go and make disciples." Matthew 28:19

Our Mission: Love God. Love Others.

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- Live our faith beyond Sundays;
- Connect with people outside our church;
- Build relationships that allow others to explore faith; and
- Encourage people to grow as disciples of Jesus.

John 4:39-42

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers.

42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

25 Simple Ways To Be Missional In Your Neighborhood

Josh Reeves

I have found that it is often helpful to have practical ideas to start engaging the people around me. Most of the things on this list are normal, everyday things that many people are already doing. The hope is that we would do these things with Gospel intentionality. This means we do them:

- In the normal rhythms of life pursuing to meet and engage new people
- Prayerfully watching and listening to discern where God is working.
- Boldly, humbly, and contextually proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.

Not all of these are for everyone, but hopefully there will be several ideas on the list that God uses to help you engage your neighbors. Would love to hear stories of how you have lived some of these out or other ways you have engaged your neighbors.

1. Stay outside in the front yard longer while watering the yard
2. Walk your dog regularly around the same time in your neighborhood
3. Sit on the front porch and letting kids play in the front yard
4. Pass out baked goods (fresh bread, cookies, brownies, etc.)
5. Invite neighbors over for dinner
6. Attend and participate in HOA functions
7. Attend the parties invited to by neighbors
8. Do a food drive or coat drive in winter and get neighbors involved
9. Have a game night (yard games outside, or board games inside)
10. Art swap night – bring out what you're tired of and trade with neighbors
11. Grow a garden and give out extra produce to neighbors
12. Have an Easter egg hunt on your block and invite neighbors use their front yards
13. Start a weekly open meal night in your home
14. Do a summer BBQ every Friday night and invite others to contribute
15. Create a block/ street email and phone contact list for safety
16. Host a sports game watching party
17. Host a coffee and dessert night
18. Organize and host a ladies artistic creation night
19. Organize a tasting tour on your street (everyone sets up food and table on front porch)
20. Host a movie night and discussion afterwards
21. Start a walking/running group in the neighborhood
22. Start hosting a play date for other stay at home parents
23. Organize a carpool for your neighborhood to help save gas
24. Volunteer to coach a local little league sports team
25. Have a front yard ice cream party in the summer