

As part of our **5 Reasons Why** series we're trying out different options for Hub discussion. You can either talk through some of the issues and ideas raised by the talk, or take the time to discuss sharing faith.

PASS IT ON

Sharing good news with others

Where are you coming from?

- How do you feel about sharing your faith with others?
- What things inhibit you from talking about your faith with those outside church?
- Do you think every Christian is supposed to tell people about their faith, or is it just for a particular type of personality?

What Gives?

Following Jesus means, among other things, engaging in his mission to reach the world and bring men and women back into relationship with God.

The Apostle Paul said that God, the Saviour, "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 4.4). And the most loving way for God to communicate this saving truth is not to blast people into submission with His mighty power, but to use ordinary people, simply telling their stories.

Each of the four gospels, as well as the book of Acts, contains an account of Jesus giving his followers a solemn command to share the good news with the whole world. It's sometimes referred to as The Great Commission, the call for every follower of Jesus to help other people become followers too.

In this context of mission and outreach, Jesus promised that he would be with us always (Matthew 28.20), and that he would equip and empower us to be effective witnesses for him (Acts 1.8).

The Key

Read 2 Corinthians 5.14-20

14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry

of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.

The heart of all of this is, simply, love. Paul says that it's the love of Jesus – the love that he's shown to us, as well as the love that he has for all people – that motivates us to share with others. The more real our experience of Jesus' love, the more compelled we are to tell people about it, to not keep it to ourselves, to not be inhibited by fear.

Paul goes on to use the analogy of an ambassador. God has given us this incredible honour of representing him and speaking on his behalf to those we know. An ambassador doesn't speak out of her own authority, but out of the authority of the state or ruler she represents. Not only that, she has the entire weight and power of that state behind her. She has a crucial part to play, but she's not expected to do it all on her own.

It's the same with us. We are charged with the mission of reconciling people back to God, but we have all the resources and capability of heaven behind us. It's never our job to save people, that's the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. We just have to be willing for Him to use us.

Discussion

- Why is it more loving for God to use the stories of ordinary Christians to reach out to people, instead of doing something a bit more convincing and supernatural?
- Why is the love of Christ the key for us in sharing our faith? Surely it should be ability, or confidence, or knowledge that qualifies us to talk to others.
- An ordinary person with a genuine experience to share, is far more powerful than a slick communicator with a sales pitch. Discuss.
- Do you think you need to have all the answers and vast experience before you can start telling people about your faith journey? What do you think is the key in communicating what you've experienced with others?

What Next?

It's a mistake to not think about how to share your faith until the opportunity arises. The likelihood is that you'll end up flustered, uncertain and wrong footed.

In fact, there are more opportunities to talk about God with those around us than we expect. But we tend to miss them because we're not expecting them.

The key to success is getting ready ahead of time. And that means preparing ourselves and praying for ourselves.

Preparing Ourselves

"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." 1 Peter 3.15

- Think through your own basic story of finding faith.
- Think through your experience of church and what others might find helpful.
- Think through the steps you took to find faith, like Alpha or talking to others.
- Have something in mind that you can invite friends to.

Take a bit of time to work through a few of these steps as a group together. Talk things through and get a bit of practice and confidence in sharing your stories.

Praying for Ourselves

First of all, pray for **opportunities** to speak about your faith to friends, neighbours and colleagues. There's more prayer in the Bible for Christians sharing a message of faith, than there is for non-Christians hearing the message. It might be easier to narrow your prayers down to two or three people that you feel are most sympathetic.

"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity." Colossians 4.3-5

Secondly, pray for the **boldness** you need to talk about such a private and vulnerable thing.

"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Acts 4.29,30

Goals for the week:

Pray for one opportunity to talk about your faith journey with a non-church friend this week. Think through what you might say and how you might say it. Be humble and considerate, but pray that God gives you courage to communicate clearly.