

The Discipline of Disciple-Making: Disciples Share God's Simple Plan of Salvation

From Acts 2:21-28:31

Have you ever wondered how people in the Bible shared the Gospel, and did evangelism way back then? Last week we looked at our Discipline of Discipleship and saw that we have the very same Gospel, the very same Mission, and the very same power source of the Spirit of God. This week we need to go onward to examine exactly how they communicated that Gospel.

Just as in the Four Gospels we see Jesus Christ communicating the Gospel, so we see those closest to Him taking that message He taught them and passing it on. What exactly was the way the disciples, and the rank and file New Testament church members explained the plan of salvation? That is perhaps the most fascinating of the elements of disciple-making that I can think of.

THE GREATEST EVANGELISM COURSE OF ALL

There are 22 carefully recorded witnessing events in the Book of Acts.

These descriptions of the disciples witnessing, follow the three-plus years of evangelism school Christ had led the disciples through, as He trained them to be the Apostles of His Church.

In the Gospel by Matthew we find Jesus explaining the Gospel 39x; in the Gospel by Mark we see Him doing so 10x; Luke has 29x; and the Gospel by John has 24x. So we can say that the Four Gospels have recorded 96 scenes, of Jesus Christ Who came to seek and to save the lost, actually at work presenting the Gospel.

THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL WE ARE TO SHARE

Now please turn with me to the end of the Gospel by Luke¹. In Luke 24:44-49 we find Jesus summarizing His ministry and formulating the

¹ 00604AM & PM WWJ-15-16

sending off charge to His disciples, describing the content of their evangelistic ministries. Please stand, follow along, and listen carefully:

Luke 24:45-49 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 **"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 "And you are witnesses of these things.** 49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem **until you are endued with power from on high."**

Wow, they are given a message and told to wait until they are connected with the very intimate, indwelling power source of God's Spirit. Then, when they are online, they are to launch out and do what they saw, heard, and learned from the very life and ministry of Jesus.

Now as we turn to Acts we are actually turning on what would almost appear to be a video that lasts 30 years. Acts is not so much a book on doctrine as it is a divinely recorded and edited video of 30 years of sharing the greatest message ever given, by the greatest witnesses ever chosen. You see, the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles to go and take the Gospel to the World. The Book of Acts is our most critical insight into how they shared the Gospel!

SEEING HOW 1ST CENTURY EVANGELISM WAS DONE

So the book of Acts is a report that God gave to us, of how the Apostles Christ personally trained, and the disciples they trained, shared the Gospel message in every possible setting.

What we get is to see how the eyewitnesses and those they trained, shared with the world what happened in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As we go through all 28 chapters of this book we find that there are 22-recorded events where a Gospel Message is presented.

MESSAGE ONE: The first Gospel presentation is in Acts 2. The time has come. After being called to be a fisherman for eternal souls. After being given on site, hands on training for three plus years. After being tutored privately, commissioned publicly, and filled with the very Holy Spirit of God, Peter steps up to the microphone to deliver his first sermon. I'm sure his

pulse was throbbing in anticipation, his heart pounding with excitement to at last say what he had been taught, shown, and commanded him, to say.

So here it is, here is Gospel Presentation number one in Acts chapter 2. Peter preaches the first sermon after Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and sending the Holy Spirit down to indwell the Church. What does he say? Note in Acts 2:21 a verse we all know from soul winning, (it is actually a quote from Joel 2:32):

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord **shall be saved.**'

Now to the conclusion in Acts 2:37-38:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, **what shall we do?**" 38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**; and you **shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The result? Note Acts 2:41

Then those who **gladly received his word** were baptized; and that day about **three thousand souls** were added to them.

So, what was the summary of the first **Gospel Presentation: One word, repent.**

MESSAGE TWO: As we move on we find the second Gospel presentation in Acts 3:19. Again it is Peter preaching after the wonderful healing of the man who had been unable to walk for over 40 years (Acts 4:22). What is the gospel message? Listen to Acts 3:19, and then v. 26:

v. 19 "**Repent therefore and be converted**, that your **sins may be blotted out**, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

v. 26 "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in **turning away every one of you from your iniquities.**"

What is the message? Peter actually states two parts: **repent** and **turn** (turn is the meaning of "be converted" which is the translation of the Greek word *epistrepho*). *Strepho* means "to turn around" and *epi* means, "on, at, around, etc." it is a preposition attached to a word to magnify the

meaning. So in street talk it would be "really turn around, away from iniquity". What happened to those who listened? Listen to Luke's accounting in Acts 4:4:

However, **many of those who heard the word believed**; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

So, what is the summary after two **Gospel Presentations**: *repent, and turn away from iniquity*.

MESSAGE THREE: We come to the third Gospel presentation in Acts 4:12:

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which **we must be saved**."

There is a common description we use today. Peter said in the third description of salvation: we must be saved; but from what we might ask? Well when the name of the Messiah was given as Jesus it was stated in Matthew 1:21:

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will **save His people from their sins**."

So what is being saved? Saved from sins. So, what is the summary after three **Gospel Presentations**: *repent, turn away from iniquity, and be saved from sins*.

MESSAGE FOUR: The next Gospel Presentation comes in Acts 5:31-32, as Peter is again speaking, declaring the way of salvation:

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give **repentance** to Israel and **forgiveness of sins**. 32 "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to **those who obey** Him."

Here is the summary after four Gospel Presentations: *repent, turn away from iniquity, be saved from sins, by God's forgiveness*.

Now, as we turn to Acts 8 several things are happening. Time has passed, greater persecution has started, and others are preaching the

Apostolic Message of Salvation. Philip has gone to the next level, as Jesus said to in Acts 1:8:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea **and Samaria**, and to the end of the earth.”

MESSAGE FIVE: The next Gospel Presentation is no longer directed just to Jews, now Samaritans, half Jew and half Gentile, are getting the message. Now we see for the first time a false believer. Jesus warned of this in the Gospels, now we see it. Note Acts 8:13:

Then Simon himself also **believed**; and when he **was baptized** he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs, which were done.

So he believed and was baptized, but something was missing. When the Apostle Peter who has given every recorded Gospel Message on this videotape so far shows up to confirm the veracity of this evangelistic outreach he declares something was lacking from this man's conversion. Listen and note the report in Acts 8:21-23:

“You have **neither part nor portion in this matter** (what matter? Salvation), for your **heart is not right in the sight of God**. (Wow, what makes a heart right in God's sight Peter?) 22 “**Repent** therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be **forgiven** you. 23 “For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

Simon believed and was baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit, which was the seal of true conversion and New Birth.

This means that belief and baptism without repentance was insufficient. He never repented of his sin so he was never saved! Salvation again is stated by Peter to involve a turning from sin, which is called repentance and conversion.

So, here is the summary after five Gospel Presentations: **really repent, turn away from iniquity, be saved from sins, by God's forgiveness.**

Quickly now, here is a vital point. Philip was shown that as Jesus warned, there would be those who believed and went through baptism, but

were never saved. What does Philip do? He emphasizes something that we see in:

MESSAGE SIX: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 8:35-37:

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning **at this Scripture, preached Jesus** to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "**If you believe with all your heart**, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Philip began to beware of false professors. He didn't look for merely believing the facts; he sought a heart of faith for Jesus. What lesson had Philip learned from Peter on soul winning? I think Peter's visit to Samaria has drawn Philip back to Christ's first warning of false professors of faith. Jesus had taught Peter and the apostles this type of person: *who said all the right things and yet lacked true saving faith.*

As Jesus taught His disciples to be soul winners, He said false professions would come. Listen to Jesus in Matthew 7:21 and 23:

v. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**

v. 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, **you who practice lawlessness!**'

Jesus said that truly saved people: *turn from doing their own will and going their own way, to doing God's will and way.* You say, that sounds impossible. It is humanly, that is why only those *born from above* are truly saved.

Here is the summary after six Gospel Presentations: *really repent, turn away from iniquity, be saved from sins, by God's forgiveness, **and by believing with all your heart.***

MESSAGE SEVEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 9:4-6 which records the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, into Paul the Apostle. This event is described at length in Acts 26.

MESSAGE EIGHT: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 10:35-43 where salvation is described as believing, receiving remission of sins, and God granting repentance. This is summarized in v. 43:

MESSAGE NINE: The next Gospel Presentation is in 11:20-21 where salvation is described as *believing and turning* in v. 21.

MESSAGE TEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 13:38-39, 48 where salvation is described as *forgiveness to all who believe*, who do so at the appointment of God.

MESSAGE ELEVEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 14:27-15:9 where salvation is described as *God opening the door of faith and purifying the heart*.

MESSAGE TWELVE: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 15:19 where salvation is described as *turning to God and away from what offends God's Word and people*.

MESSAGE THIRTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:14 where salvation is described as *the Lord opening a person's heart to heed His Word*.

MESSAGE FOURTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:31 where salvation is described as *believing*.

MESSAGE FIFTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 17:1-7, where salvation is described by pagans who observed the process as: *getting a new King of your life*.

MESSAGE SIXTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 17:30 where salvation is described as *God commanding all to repent*.

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 18:8-13 where salvation is described as *believing*, and being *drawn by God to worship Him*.

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 19:8-26 where salvation is described as *a Kingdom, following a Way, which people follow instead of their own way*.

MESSAGE NINETEEN: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 20:21-25 where salvation is described as *repentance, faith, and entering into God's Kingdom*.

MESSAGE TWENTY: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 24:14-25:13 where salvation is described as a Way of Worship, that involves righteousness, self-control, and averts judgment; and that message makes the lost to fear. Thus not an easy to believe, "try Jesus" message! Note the audience that hears Paul's message. Paul is facing pagans, steeped in sin, lost and doomed men and women. What does he tell lost people?

First is a little known figure introduced in Acts 24:27 **Porcius Festus** was a member of the Roman nobility. **King Agrippa** was Herod Agrippa II, the son of the Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter. He was the last of the Herods, who play a prominent role in NT history².

Bernice. Not Agrippa's wife, but his consort and sister. (Their sister, Drusilla, was married to the former governor, Felix). Agrippa was living in an incestuous³ relationship with his own sister, which was the talk of Rome, where Agrippa had grown up. His wicked partner in sin, Bernice, for a while even became the mistress of Emperor Vespasian, then of his son Titus, but always returned to her brother.

WERE THEY CAUTIOUS NOT TO OFFEND?

So how does Paul do personal evangelism with big shots, who have sordid lives? He hits them with God's Word, God's Law, God's Holiness, and their utter failure to meet His standard.

Note what Paul says in Acts 24:25 **righteousness, self-control, and the judgment.** "God demands "righteousness" of all men, because of His holy nature (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). For men and women to conform to that absolute standard requires "self-control." The result of failing to exhibit self-control and to conform oneself to God's righteous standard is (apart from salvation) "judgment." **Felix was afraid.** Living with a woman he had lured away from her husband, Felix obviously lacked "righteousness" and "self-control." The realization that he faced "judgment" alarmed him, and he hastily dismissed Paul. **when I have a convenient time.** The moment of conviction passed, and Felix foolishly passed up his opportunity to repent (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2)".⁴

MESSAGE TWENTY ONE: The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 26:14-20 where we see the Gospel Message directly from Jesus, who is at work doing soul winning on Paul right here in the Book of Acts.

Jesus describes salvation as opened eyes, turning, receiving, and being sanctified. Jesus who saved Paul, explained to him that the same miraculous events of salvation, accomplished by God's power, was what

² He was the grand-nephew of Herod Antipas, the Herod of the gospels who wanted Jesus to do a trick, and then mocked Jesus at his crucifixion and to whom Jesus would not even utter a word (Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:1; 13:31-33; 23:7-12), and he was the great-grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled at the time Jesus was born, and murdered the innocents at Bethlehem in cruel, calculated, cold bloodedness (Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5). He was a man who knew so much, but cared so little.

³ Drawn from Acts 12, 25 and 26 by John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

⁴ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

God also wanted to see happen in the lives of lost people everywhere Paul preached:

v. 18 'to **open their eyes**, in order to **turn them from darkness to light**, and **from the power of Satan to God**, that they may receive **forgiveness of sins** and an **inheritance** among those who are **sanctified** by **faith in Me.**'

Here is the summary after 21 Gospel Presentations: *really repent, turn away from iniquity, be saved from sins, by God's forgiveness, by believing with all your heart, and **God opens your eyes, God turns you from darkness to light, God sets you free from the power of Satan, God gives you an eternal inheritance, God begins a never ending, life-long sanctification—all through faith in Christ Jesus.***

So what did that mean to Paul? He explains it in v. 19-20:

"Therefore, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision**, 20 "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and **then to the Gentiles**, that they should **repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**

What did Paul tell the lost pagans? Did his message differ from one he had for the Jews? No, one Gospel, one salvation, one faith!

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO and final Gospel Message is in Acts 28:31 where salvation is described as coming into God's Kingdom. The starting message in Acts is: *repent*; and the concluding message is: *enter God's Kingdom*, both rarely if ever used today.

Just before we go, look back again at Acts 4:20 where those early disciples confess that they just can't stop speaking about Christ. That was their life, their purpose, and their plan. But what has happened since? It seems through the centuries evangelistic fervor has ebbed and flowed.

WHAT'S HAPPENED?

We have the same Risen Christ as they did.
We have the same indwelling Holy Spirit that they did.

We have the same clear Mandate that they were given. But what has happened to us?

Two generations ago, an Episcopalian Rector lamented his denominations slide from the Scriptures by writing a piece that has spread far and wide, and is just as impactful today as it was back then. Let me read to you what he wrote over 60 years ago.

"On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks were frequent, a crude little rescue station was built. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted crewmen kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought for themselves, they went out day or night, tirelessly searching for any who might need help. Many lives were saved by their devoted efforts.

After a while the station became famous. Some of those who were saved, as well as others in the surrounding area, wanted to become a part of the work. They gave time and money for its support. New boats were bought, additional crews were trained, and the station grew.

Some of the members became unhappy that the building was so crude. They felt a larger, nicer place would be more appropriate as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with hospital beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Soon the station became a popular gathering place for its members to discuss the work and to visit with each other. They continued to remodel and decorate until the station more and more took on the look and character of a club. Fewer members were interested in going out on rescue missions, so they hired professional crews to do the work on their behalf. The rescue motif still prevailed on the club emblems and stationery, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club held its initiations.

One day a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in many boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, bruised, and sick; and some had black or yellow skin. The beautiful new club was terribly messed up, and so the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside, where the shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's rescue activities altogether, as

being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted on keeping rescue as their primary purpose and pointed out that, after all, they were still called a rescue station. But those members were voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives they could begin their own station down the coast somewhere.

As the years went by, the new station gradually faced the same problems the other one had experienced. It, too, became a club, and its rescue work became less and less of a priority. The few members who remained dedicated to lifesaving began another station. History continued to repeat itself; and if you visit that coast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown."⁵

In the 1st Century the Lord Jesus Christ that saved them, also asked them to go through life communicating the Gospel.

In the 21st Century the same Lord Jesus Christ that saved us, also asks us to go through life communicating the Gospel.

As we head out to be doers of what we have heard from God's Word, these questions should be on our minds: *"Am I doing the mission Christ left me to do? Am I speaking to the lost for Him?"*

⁵ MacArthur, John (2001). Pg. 111-112. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, paraphrasing Episcopalian rector Theodore Wedel's "Parable of the Life Saving Station", 1953.