

Sermon: Sunday, May 13, 2007

Pastor's note:

Sorry the recording equipment at the theatre did not work. What follows is a printed copy. I don't follow it explicitly but it will give you a sense of Sunday morning. Actually, this Sunday the Spirit gave me a fair bit of freedom and leading as I spoke we had a great time and God spoke to us. I sat on a stool that I picked up at a yard sale it made things very relaxed.

They are 4 video clips and one sound clip that you will miss. The one that really matters is a portion of Rob Bell's message entitled YOU. If you would like to see please contact the office. Enjoy and may God touch you. Jeff

Mother's Day prayer & video

PPPVIDEO MOTHERS

WORSHIP WE HAVE COME
SWEET MERCIES
ABOVE ALL ELSE

PPP Week Three - Just Walk Across the Room:
The Power of Story

I am going to give you an overview of where we have been...
in this series entitled Just Walk Across the Room...
and where we are going this morning.

This series fits in with our vision..... of being a church that touches this community... and that entails walking across the room...

We do not exist for ourselves but for those outside our walls.

From an eternal perspective..... we have all we need...
There is really only one thing..... that we need....
And that is TO.....

PPP WALK ACROSS THE ROOM

and share God's love... with others... if we don't there will always be something missing in our lives...

If we maintain a self focus we will never have peace or truly know what it mean to be free.

I want you to reflect on the apostle Paul's attitude.... remember this guy wrote most of the New Testament. I just love this passage.

PPP ...yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings. NLT 1Cor 9:19b-23

Our joy as followers... is rooted in sharing the message with others....
and to do that you need to become all things to all people so that...

as Paul says you might bring them to Christ.

You see a fundamental part of being happy and having peace in this life... comes from knowing and following God's plan... of selfless living. When you have that peace and joy and other focus... you become a contagious person...

Our vision is to serve others and share this good news with them... basically that they will be happy and at peace when they put God and others first... and seek to grow everyday...

Hey those are our core values...

PPP CORE VALUES

So you see everything we do...
is planned around our vision and mission of reaching people.

PPP VISION MAP

Now you have seen this vision map and we want to keep it before you... right now.... in this series we are focussed on equipping the CORE and the COMMITTED to make it easier for you to reach out and invite the CURIOUS, the CROWD and the COMMUNITY to the upcoming series that are designed to meet their needs and answer their questions.

The COMMUNITY is everybody in Huntsville,
the CROWD represents the group of people we all have some sort of personal contact with.
The CURIOUS are those who have and are expressing some interest in spiritual things and our church.

The idea is to move people from one group to the next..

PPP AUTOMATE ARROWS

This entails walking across the room....
In the first message of this series we started by considering these five things about walking across the room...:

PPP WALKING ACROSS THE ROOM

- PPP 1. You need to enter into the unknown.
(add each to previous)
- PPP 2. You need to go humbly
- PPP 3. Know and trust God's Word and Name;
- PPP 4. Have faith;
- PPP 5. Hear and follow the Spirit

The next week we got a little more specific...
we talked about living in 3-D....

PPP 3-D LIVING

Walking across the room making friends... developing relationships should be just a way of life for us.
It is life 101... Now ultimately... it would be good to be able share the wonderful spiritual awareness and new life you have found.

But sharing your understanding of life and spirituality must begin with relationship... with developing friendships (P)

it has to... doesn't that make sense... and what is wrong with that.

HEY.... friends... You are allowed to have friends who do not believe..... They are good people.... And you can even learn much from them about life.... So we need to...

PPP Point 1: Develop Friendships (ATP)

I mean if walking across the room doesn't.... begin here... it is destined to fail. It must begin with a genuine interest in who the other person....

You just can't fake this... You know something.....

if you are genuinely interested in someone.....

you will be interested in their story.... and that is the second part of living life in 3-D

PPP Point 2: Discover Stories (add to previous)

You need to become a good listener and a good storyteller.

We are going to talk a bit more about this today.

Now the third thing in 3 - d living is...

PPP Point 3: Discern Next Steps (Add to previous)

Now some of this entails just plain ole good thinking...

USE YOUR BRAIN!

Hey when someone tells you about there deepest loss.... you don't turn toward the waiter and say CHECK please... or can I get a side of gravy... or hey this was great... gotta run... USE YOUR BRAIN!

You can also feel..... in your heart what is right...

Sometimes all someone needs is to hear.... is for someone... anyone to say... "I'm so sorry that happened..." To them... Out loud.

Speak the words... (P) words have power.

To have someone look them right in the eye and say....

"You have been through so much you have an incredible story...!"

You need to use you brain and your heart...

in a way... being wise is knowing how to use your brain and their heart.

Now discernment will also come from the Spirit...

And the Spirit can use your mind and heart to lead you...

sometimes you will just have a prompting...

we need to learn to hear and follow these inner promptings...

we will look at this next week...

The rest of this morning we are going to focus in on The Power of Story.

PPP Kid pic and title

Three points...

PPPHO POINT 1.

OTHER PEOPLE HAVE A STORY.... LEARN TO LISTEN WELL;

We have been focussing on this.

PPPHO POINT 2.

YOU HAVE A STORY.... LEARN TO TELL IT WELL;

Today we will talk about this.

PPPHO POINT 3.

GOD HAS A STORY..... LEARN TO COMMUNICATE IT IN A NON- THREATENING WAY;

We will also look at this...

Is everybody awake this morning? Is anybody awake?
Come on everybody got an extra half hour this morning...
our new service time of 10 am.... rocks!

Hey anyone show up at 9:30? Feels good to be early... doesn't it!

Okay it is good you are well rested because we're headed for a brain-bender right out of the blocks. (P)
Ready to roll?

Here's how it will work.

I will say a word or phrase, and then you just tell the person sitting next to you what comes to mind.
REAL FAST...

A little word association for your Sunday morning.

Your response can be anything, remember ... anything that immediately comes to mind.
But the key is to go fast and keep it clean..
Okay here goes now you can't give this a lot of thought.... that's a rule.

The idea is to capture your gut-instinct immediately after you hear what comes out of my mouth. Deal?

All right, here's the first word ...

PPP Mona....

Mona! [Allow a few seconds for people to respond]

PPP pic of Mona Lisa

Any "Lisas" out there? Okay, so... some of you are in sync with me.

Ready for the next one?

How about ...

PPP The Stanley.....

The Stanley! [Allow a few seconds for people to respond.]

PPP pic of cup

PPP Church Muskoka.....

Church Muskoka.... [Allow a few seconds for people to respond.]

I hope you all got that one...

PPP [Logo and Church Muskoka Style](#)

Okay now lets go deeper..... simple word association....
Very quickly... say the first word to you neighbour...

PPP [Sun.....](#)

Sun that was harder... doubled meaning tot that one

(WAIT)

Okay here we go....

PPP [Dad...](#)

Dad

(WAIT)

Let's keep moving...

PPP [Child](#)

Child

This should be interesting...

Okay what about...

PPP [School](#)

School

Okay here is another....

Born again Christian

PPP [Born-again Christian](#)

(WAIT)

Now what if I said "saved... by grace..."

.....Or..... "Praise the Lord"

Okay..., (P) let's stop there for a moment.

Wouldn't it be interesting if we could electronically tabulate all the words that are floating around in people's minds after these words and have them flash across the screen?

Personally, I think the results would be fascinating.

Let's take it a step further.

What do you think would happen if we did the same exercise with a hundred people who live in Huntsville and are sitting at home right now... (P)..... people who don't go to church.

What do the words.... "Born-again Christian?"

Bring to mind for them.....

Hey how about we just ask them for their general impressions of Christians.... (P) and forget about the born again part?

We might get quite an earful, (P) don't you think?

What would the screen show.... if we put up their first thoughts?

In a general sense... would their perceptions include things like these:

"I've come across a few Christians, and the ones I know are ... hmmm, how do I describe them ... (P) they're just so ... (P) uptight ... narrow ... (P) and rigid."

Now I am not saying that their perceptions are right or wrong... here... just that these are..... in fact.... their perceptions many have.

Maybe they would have thoughts like this.....

"I went to school with one.... once ... (P) he was pretty isolated. Kept to himself for the most part."

Or ...

"I don't know any of them very well. They seem to hang with their own type ... certainly don't rub shoulders with people like me."

Or what about ...

"I know a born-again Christian ... what a turnoff she is! I feel judged if I even inhale wrong. She's so self-righteous, haughty ... and such a gossip...."

"Christians? They are always trying to shove their worldview and belief system on me... yet.... they don't follow it themselves.... other centered... servant focussed.... love enemies... right!"

Now, please understand, this is hard to take... but fact is these perceptions are out there.

Just go and ask a few people what they think... about Christians and church

PPPVIDEO **PROBLEMS WITH CHRISTIANS** - brief clip interviewing people on the street in regard to what they think about Christians and church.

Hey.... friends most of the people that God would like to reach.... think like this.

They have a bad taste in their mouth in regard to religion.

(WAIT)

Which is a very good thing..... in my opinion..... Cause we at Church Muskoka Style are not into religion either.... and you know something else... Neither was Jesus.... Actually we want our community to know that we are not into religion either.

Jesus came to teach about relationship and love... and dying to self and living for others....

Guess what..... people out there.... love this kind fo stuff.... It speaks to something deep inside them... about what is right and wrong...

So why these bad perceptions of Christians out there?

And how can each of us do something to change it?

To reverse these trends ...

Fact is friends that when an unbeliever comes... out to an event.... they are on edge... (P) before they even arrive. I remember what it was like.

Hey we need to give our community something good to say about Christ-followers!

Here's what I wish.

I wish that whenever I struck up a casual conversation with people and asked them to tell me what they think of the Christ-followers they know, the first thought that would come to mind..... would be something like,

"Hmmm ... Christians? They are easy going... (P) fun loving... (P) full of life... Now I can't say it's true for them all, but the ones I know are....

Or ...

"Christians? The ones I've come across are ridiculously filled with compassion. They're just plain kind to people!"

Or ...

"Christians? Hey they tell the truth ... they shoot straight with you."

"Christians? They have concern for the poor.... and oppressed... no one cares for the poor like Christians do.... and they don't do it just to make converts."

"Christians? They're humble people, they're honest ... they have this incredible inner strength."

How about this....

"Christians? They are radically inclusive of people, regardless of their background, their preferences, their lifestyle choices, they respect your views.... It's amazing!"

"Christians? They're always taking walks across rooms. Whenever somebody needs a little encouragement or friendship, Christians are the first ones to make the move. They are not so much concerned about themselves..."

"Christians? They really do love well. They love God, they love people ... and they do this 24 / 7."

That's the type of press.... I wish were out there about us, friends!

And you know what..... we are starting to get some of that press...

And this is why we have set a high standard... here at Church Muskoka Style.

We are producing Christ followers who live it... (P) who aren't negative and critical... Who are breaking unhealthy attachments to money and things...

a hard thing to do... in this day and age...

people who are being changed by Jesus... from the inside out....

And when this isn't happening....

well we come along side and support and challenge people...

because when our members join our team... they ask for this...

Keep me accountable... yes I believe in these habits... generous radical giving of money and time...

meditating and praying and reading God's Word... committing to a living room small group...

These are non-negotiables... for me.... And I know myself so at times I

will need someone to give me a push or a pull... I need discipline...

And you know what.... the fact is these habits bring about life change...

Now don't ever confuse these things with religion or rituals...

these are simple basic spiritual disciplines....

that a follower chooses to follow...

so as to grow and become more and more like Jesus.

You know what I also wish?

I wish people said ...

"You should hear them talk about their own faith journeys ...

they are always so humble ... (P) so interesting to listen to!

They don't go on and on about themselves... (P)

And they don't pressure me...

They have a genuine respect for my views and beliefs...

And whenever you ask them about God, they are so clear!

They are so unbelievably pumped up about him! They just seem to love Him.

(P)

Now, can I ask you something?

Is this how you want people of Huntsville to perceive Church Muskoka style followers?

I hope your answer is yes.

Because that is what we're devoting our time to this week.

Really working on the perceptions that others have of us.

NOW AS WE HAVE SAID IT ALL BEGINS BY LISTENING TO OTHERS...

PPP THE POWER OF STORY IN RELATIONSHIP

1. Listening to someone's STORY.

I hope you are getting this... I mean listening...

really listening....

and also controlling any knee jerk reactions...

and I'll admit I am not perfect at this.... it is not easy...

We must come to be able to grace people who have very different ideas than ours.

Let things be said.... even when our whole being is screaming NO NO... that's not truth.... that's not right... all paths don't lead to God....
I must convince them otherwise.

NO NO NO NO NO NO NO....

Let it ride... (P) my friend.... sense what God is saying to you...

The thing is what they are saying may not be true theologically....
but it is a true representation of what they think and we need to be able to respect that.

It has taken them years of life experience to get to where they are - and you won't change them in 5 minutes.... or 30 or even 60... but you may do a whole lot more damage....

You see if you can't respect their views and opinions and ideas...
how can you expect them to accept.... or even consider yours?

Come on... doesn't this make sense....

So this is my point... very seldom will God ever call you to start with your own story.... And seldom will He call you to start with... His story... or with spouting off theological truth.

Almost always He just calls you to..... listen.... listen to other people's stories.

You need to listen... (p) and listen well.

Every person has a story and it might take more than one encounter to really hear it.... and understand.

Be aware of your facial expressions... nod and ask questions..

When they say something you don't understand.. ask for clarification...

Don't worry about sounding dumb... "what was that word you just used...?" This actually happened to me this week.... I had to ask about a word. The upside is that then they will know you are really listening.

Sometimes people will say a word that you don't know on purpose.... just to see if you really care about what they are saying. It's true...

A lot of people before really sharing with you..... from their heart will wait to see if you are really listening.

And if you really do care..... and if you can be really trusted...
before giving you the real goods.

That only makes sense too...

Come to love listening to other people's stories... it is not hard at all..

Watch for God's work in their life.. (P) It will be there....

Hey.... trust me.. If you listen well and care for them and speak encouraging words eventually.... they will ask you about your story.

Now when that happens.. (P) When someone asks you about your story....

You need to recognize that you have been given the greatest opportunity.... (P) and you mustn't blow it...

So on the agenda for this morning is thinking about how we convey our personal faith journey in a way that's humble and interesting?

Each of us has a story.... a great story... a story worth sharing... but we can totally mess it up.... in so many ways.

Now if you have read the chapters for this week... (show the book)
Bill makes no bones about it....

This is an area where Christians mess up all the time.

I just loved reading stories of the mistakes people make... And I'll tell you I learned a few things myself.

Like how to not use the wrong words... words that other may not understand... christainese it's just not cool....

PPPVVIDEO WALK3CHURCHWORDS - (girl shares using many "Christianese" terms)

Also when your walking across the room talking to people it is important to not have that superiority thing going on...

PPPVVIDEO WALK3KNOWITALLCHRISTIANS - (guy shares with a know it all attitude - "I pray all the time... I pray fro people like you... people who haven't got it altogether")

You know something as an unbeliever I would not be interested in hearing that guys story... and I would probably tell a few people about him at work the next day.

When you build bridges in the right way and as you really get to know people it helps you in terms of knowing what you should share.... What parts of your story are most relevant... and as you share and they come to see who you are.... they may begin to want to know more about this God that is changing you and you love and serve Him... His story...

Okay so have you figured out the common theme this morning?

PPPPPP STORY

PPP Stories Are Powerful!

The power that stories can have is undeniable.
Throughout the ages and cross cultures... stories reign and rule...
they have the power to tear down and raise up...

They have power... The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is filled with stories.

PPP (of stories from the Bible ie... David and Goliath, Noah and the flood, Adam and Eve, Moses and the Burning Bush, Suffering Job and His three buddies, Daniel and the Lions Den, Shadrach Meshach and Abendego in the Fiery furnace..., Samson and Delilah.... Jonah and the Whale, the list goes on and on... What about Jesus... he taught by using Parables... stories.... A farmer sowing seed, The Good Samaritan, A Son squandering his inheritance, A man storing up wealth and building bigger barns, A vineyard owner, A wedding feast,

Feeding of the Five Thousand, Walking on water... Water into wine,
(END WITH GOD'S WORD COMING OUT - OVER TOP THEM ALL)

Jesus used stories to teach all the time...
The Bible is in large part... a storybook... it is full of real life stories...
Now stories are powerful..... because they are made up of words...

And Words..... are powerful... We communicate with words...
God spoke the physical world into being through words,

Jesus is the Word..... made flesh...

PPP "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:1-4

I found myself meditating on this recently... words.... language...

Vibrations made by air passing over vocal cords...

Incredible that we communicate this way and that there are so many different languages... actually there is a story about that in the Bible too.... The Tower of Babel...
Words when used appropriately have power...
And the Bible teaches of this...

This verse is speaking about God's Words...

PPP "As your words are taught, they give light; even the simple can understand them." Psalm 119:130

Psalm 119:130 says that words from God can actually give light.... and that when taught they make sense even to those who are simpleminded...

PPP "Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." NLT Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 16:24 says that pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the body. Isn't that so true?

PPP "Words satisfy the soul as food satisfies the stomach; the right words on a person's lips bring satisfaction. Those who love to talk will experience the consequences, for the tongue can kill or nourish life." Proverbs 18:20-21 NLT

Words are powerful..... but too many words are not good either.
You need to be able to tell your story and keep it simple.

PPP THE POWER OF STORY IN RELATIONSHIP

1. Listening to someone's STORY.
2. Sharing your own story.

Keeping it simple...

PPP "The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?" Eccle 6:11 NIV

Ecclesiastes 6:11 says that when used sparsely ... succinctly ... words carry great meaning.

When walking across the room don't talk too much...
save a few words for the next time you will meet.

Learn how to tell your story using 100 words or less.
Seriously..... (P) 100 words or less....

Now I wanted you to know I was serious so I did it...
in a 100 words or less I told an overview of my story....
Want to hear.. It?
You have no choice...

"I was plugged into the world had a bunch of businesses running..... making good money... living life
easy.... (P)
indulging in what the world offered me.... (P)
cars (I had four classic vehicles (Nissan 300zx / 70 Challenger RT 440 magnum 6 pak.../ 63 Ford
Galaxie / 72 Jeepster Commando, trucks (6 plow trucks), skidoos...
hobbies off roading and fish... I had a 220 gallon aquarium with an Arapema in it... the largest
freshwater fish in the world...

drugs (pot and cocaine),

women... (yes)

Basically anything..... (P) and everything....

I Had lots of free time....
BUT I..... STILL WASN'T.... SATISFIED!

Like the Mick Jagger song... "I can't get no satisfaction... (P) well I've tried (P) and I've tried... and
I've tried but I can't get no... satisfaction...."
You see... I knew something was missing....

So I started to look.... and be more aware...
I sensed an outside force...
or power speaking to me.....

through the strnagest of things... movies... books... chance encounters. Even though I wanted nothing
to do with the church...
I started to read the Bible...
God led me to His church... a real church...

This is how God got my attention. And he's still working on me big time..."

Stories are powerful...

Now that was around 100 words... see... it can be done...
It is just the first bridge.... short and sweet

Now recognize that I would only share that with the right person at the right time... and I would test
the waters first... Please recognize... you all have many stories to tell... for some they might include a
darkness to light story... You need to sense which story God wants you to share...

You see I did not going to tell about selling my 1970 Dodge Challenger 440 magnum 6 pac..

PPP 1970 Dodge Challenger

Or the businesses....

About heading off out West... to the mountains and meeting a cross carrier... and ending up at a church and seeing how God just reached right down and did some amazing things...

I am not going to tell about... taking a year off... to learn about God and serve in the local church... or about my Seminary experience... that followed...

Or my frustration with the church.... that followed that.

Or strange spiritual things that have happened to me...

There is time for all that stuff down the road... Now fact is with a car nut I may indeed talk about my car... or with a guy that struggle with drugs I might share a story about my own struggles....

You know something being honest with people about your past and current struggles.... is a great way to build trust...

You see as you develop friendships you need to sense and discern when the timing is right.... (P) and don't throw your words around...

You see....

PPP "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs 12:18

Reckless words can pierce like a sword, but words from the tongue of the wise can actually bring healing!

Only say what you should... when you should....

PPP "A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent." NLT Proverbs 17:27-28

(WAIT)

When used with restraint, words prove you're a person of knowledge! Sometimes a few words speak volumes...

PPP Eccl 9:17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. NIV

(SOFTLY) This verse... says that words.... you speak.... will be heeded..... when they are..... spoken quietly!

There is power..... in quiet speech...

Okay personally I am still working on these last two... limiting my words.... and speaking softly..

Words..... So powerful... let me share another 100 with you...

these spoken in desperate times.. (P) When all seemed lost...

Words came to the rescue... Imagine a time of war... a time of death... imagine sitting around a radio and hearing these words....

PPPMP3 WESHALLFIGHT

The power of the spoken word....

WORDS... How do you use them...?

Humble words.

Healing words.

Courageous words.

Wise words.

Gentle words.

Encouraging words..

Grace-filled words.

I wonder, (P) are these the types of words you're known for speaking?

(PAUSE)

If your closest friends or the family members who actually live underneath the same roof as you were polled anonymously about this, would they say that in the course of normal, everyday life, you can be counted on to speak words of encouragement and grace?

Let's take this morning as an example.

Think about the very last thing you said before you walked into this room (today/tonight).

Do you remember who you were talking to?

Do you remember what you said?

Do you set fires with your tongue?

Were the words you spoke life-giving and inspiring and grace-filled?

Or were they...., well ... (P) quite simply.... (PAUSE) NOT?

Interesting, isn't it, that God allows such power to inhabit our words?

Whew. Astounding power. For good or for evil, right?

It seems to me that if we could find a way to use words for good in people's lives -

If we could be known for being clear and humble and succinct and relevant - with our words and stories...

then we might just start changing some of those awful perceptions that exist about Christians.

There are two primary areas where effective, efficient words could exponentially improve perceptions about Christ-followers:

1. The first revolves around how we talk about our personal experience with God ... explaining the main thing he's done in our lives.... in a hundred words or less....

2. The second area revolves around how we talk about God ... explaining who he is.... and what he has done.... telling his story.

There is an order to this because most people will connect with you, with your story and your behaviour before.....

they will be open....

to listening to you share about God.... and His Story.

Okay so do you know your story?

Can you share it in 100 words or less...

PPP "THE CHALLENGE PART 1"

1. Write a 100 word story of an experience you have had with God.

After you read the chapters for this week... and go to group. Write one story using 100 words or less that tells of an experience you have had with God. In the end it should say something about God that you value... FAITHFUL... PROVIDES... MERCIFUL... LOVING.... PRESENT.... ABLE.... KIND....

As Frank sings think about God's work in your life... jot a few notes down if you have a pen...

PPP HE'S ALWAYS BEEN FAITHFUL (USE PICTURES FROM LAST WEEK)

Write this story 100 words or less and then email it to a member of the staff and we will get you some feedback to help you improve it or maybe we will say... that was great.....! Email it to me or Melanie or Dan or Frank. Really it takes 5 or 10 minutes to do.

That's the challenge Part #1 Part #2 and Part # 3 will follow. Part #2 and #3 are optional of course.

Okay so what about sharing about God's story and His plan?

Well next week we are going to talk about how to grow in discernment.... and how to present God's plan in a very simple way.

The two are very much linked together... sharing God's story and His invitation to surrender and new life... requires a great deal of discernment and we will talk about that.

We need to realize that our story is inextricably woven together with God's story... we are a living example of what He does.

PPP

"Does it sound like we're patting ourselves on the back, insisting on our credentials, asserting our authority? Well, we're not. Neither do we need letters of endorsement, either to you or from you. You yourselves are all the endorsement we need. Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you.

Christ himself wrote it—not with ink, but with God's living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives—and we publish it.

We couldn't be more sure of ourselves in this—that you, written by Christ himself for God, are our letter of recommendation.

We wouldn't think of writing this kind of letter about ourselves. Only God can write such a letter. His letter authorizes us to help carry out this new plan of action. The plan wasn't written out with ink on paper, with pages and pages of legal footnotes, killing your spirit. It's written with Spirit on spirit, his life on our lives! 2Cor 3:1-6

Your life is a letter about the good news... it is a story of God's work....

So this is what we have been looking at this morning....

PPP THE POWER OF STORY IN RELATIONSHIP

1. Listening to someone's STORY.
2. Sharing your own story.
3. Sharing God's story

You have a story.
A powerful story.. (P) When it is told properly.
It may not involve drugs or running of to the mountains
but it is just as incredible...

Do you believe what I just said...?
that you have a powerful story to tell?

Friends, if you have come to know Jesus then you have story to tell.
Not just of how He drew you to Him.... but also of how He has and is working in your life. The story....
grows... every..... day

He rescues ... He changes... you are different because of Him... you are changing day by day...

So here is the thing is... God's story.... is reflected in your story...
He loves you... you are a living example of the Good News...

He has gone and will go to any and all lengths to rescue you... and transform you.... This process is
going on in the lives of all true believers... The transformation is lifelong...

You come to know that just as for the initial rescue.....
For every step in transformation...
You must turn to Him of your own free will....
and you must follow of your own free will...
and you must let go of SELF...

And this my friends is the stumbling block for most people...
Believer and non-believer alike....

And you can love them... and try and lead them to living water... To green pastures... to still
waters...
but there comes a time when you must leave it up to them...
keep being a friend.... but let the spiritual stuff go... there is a battle of the will against self.... that
only they can fight... pray for them...

You see God's story is all about serving and loving others..
He sent His Son Jesus to teach us and show us the way...
Stop focussing on SELF... surrender yourself to this...
follow Jesus in this regard... it is the path to true life....
and when you do... WOW....

Amazing.... life is beautiful.... (P) but when you put yourself first...
and when you seek satisfaction and affirmation from the world...

BRUTAL.... life is hard.

That is the story... my friend

The secret to all this is that our lives need to reflect the other-centered focus of Jesus...

if they don't..... (P) we have no witness... and we have no story to tell...
No good news to bring... God wants to shine his light thru us.

He has chosen to do things this way... to bring... the good news this way...

PPPVIDEO ROB BELL
PPP WE ARE THE BODY
TITHES & OFFERING
CLOSING PRAYER