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# Reaching Out – Engaging the World

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*“For God so love the world...” (John 3:16)*

*“And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom. 10:14)*

To us, Christ’s followers, is given the responsibility of proclaiming the message of God’s redeeming love to the world. It begins with our hearts aligning with God’s. He loves the world. It continues with prayerful dependence on God to do what we cannot. And it concludes with action on our part to proclaim the message without getting in the way. That is our journey this week... a journey that will begin with proper preparation and end with faith that God will work through our efforts. Climb aboard.  
–Pastor Mike

## Day 1: Reaching Out, Week 3 – Crossing Cultures

What are some truths you learned from last Sunday’s message? How can it make a difference this week?

## Day 2: The World

Read Romans 8:18-21; Colossians 1:19-20.

We live in a fallen world. Its bent is self-serving and for those things that are opposed to God. The world is fallen, but it does not mean God is not in the world. His power and glory are present in creation and today most prominently in the Church (at least it’s supposed to be). Many of His attributes are present in mankind, albeit perverted in many ways. The world is fallen, but He is not absent. What does that mean? Does that mean there is some redeeming value in this world? There must be something or else why would God want to redeem it?

Indeed, there is a redeeming value, but it is not because there is any intrinsic value in creation. It is valuable for no other reason than God has placed a high value on it. The world didn’t earn it. The world didn’t fix itself up pretty to make it more valuable (in fact, it did the opposite). Perhaps more than a redeeming quality to God’s creation is that there is an *endearing* quality.

My little brother used to have a beloved stuffed animal as a child. Of all the different animals available, his was a chicken. Not a chick, but a chicken. (How many stuffed chickens do you see today?) Over the years that chicken showed the wear and tear of love. The fur was nearly non-existent. Just tiny patches of fuzz on cloth. It was missing its eyes. Just this mangy yellow fabric thing with a little, red felt beak. As we got older we, we brothers were pretty mean, and we used to put the chicken (“chicky” was his name) in the large trash dumpster in our cul-de-sac. And my brother would cry and run out to the dumpster and dig him out. “Chicky” was beloved. Despite his tattered appearance, there was an endearing quality to him.

God created the world. And despite all of its ugliness, it has an endearing quality to Him. God so loved his creation that he wants to redeem it back for Himself. He wants to pull it out of the dumpster, so to speak -- not because the world deserves it, but because He is its Creator, and He loves what He created. He may not be pleased with the direction it is going, but it is His creation nonetheless, and He is purposing to bring it back to Himself.

Oh, that we might have that same vision of the world. Fallen, but loved. Ugly, but endearing in some sense.

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**To consider:**

How does knowing that there is an endearing quality in God's creation affect your attitude about the people and things around you (e.g. co-workers, family, friends, the environment, etc.) – especially those that aren't so endearing to you?

## Day 3: Prayer & Evangelism

Read Colossians 4:2-4.

In Paul's request for prayer, what two things does he ask for (vv. 3-4)?

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Prayer is at the front end of evangelism. Great efforts to reach out are not accomplished without prayer (Eph. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:1). The Great Awakenings throughout history were the result of prayer. Where there is a revival of prayer, there is often an awakening of God in the unbeliever. Is it the preaching that brings forth fruit? No, not without prayer. Paul, in a similar passage found in Ephesians 6, asked for prayer out of necessity. E.M. Bounds writes,

“The force of his request for prayer centered on him, that he might be able to talk with force, fluency, directness, and courage. Paul did not depend upon his natural gifts, but on those which came to him in answer to prayer. He was afraid he would be a coward, a dull, dry speaker, or a hesitating stammerer, and he urged these believers to pray that he might have courage, not only to speak clearly, but also freely and fully.” (*Prayer and Praying Men*, E.M. Bounds).

Are there people in your life that you would love to share Christ with, but are afraid that you will fail or that your words will fall on deaf ears? Then pray. Prayer can transform our abilities and awaken hearts to the gospel.

**To consider:**

Perhaps you have been praying for a friend or relative to come to Christ. Pray that God would use you to share Christ with him or her. Pray for boldness and clarity. Ask others to pray with you. And then, as the Spirit leads, move forward in faith and share Christ, leaving the results to Him.

## Day 4: Conduct & Evangelism

Read Colossians 4:5.

Proclaiming the gospel begins with an impression. The first impression we give is often seen in our actions. People looking from the outside at our lives. How we conduct ourselves toward all sorts of people. How we react to difficult situations. How we work and play. And after we have made an outside impression, there is finally personal, non-verbal contact. A smile, a courtesy, a helping hand. Our actions often paint a positive view or a negative view of Christ even before the first words of Christ reach our lips.

Today's passage has two thoughts. What are they?

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What do you think it means to “be wise” in one’s conduct toward outsiders (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12b; 2 Cor. 6:3-10; 11:7)? What does wise conduct look like with the gospel in view? On the flipside, what does unwise conduct look like?

The idea of making the MOST of EVERY opportunity seems to be asking quite a lot of us! It seems hard enough to just identify the opportunities let alone make the most of them. Perhaps that is the reason this passage (Col. 4:2-6) begins with prayer with watchfulness (v. 2). When prayer is at the frontend of proclamation, we become more aware of the opportunities before us. But making the most of those opportunities is not black and white. At the end of an encounter, it is difficult to know if the most was made of the opportunity. Let me suggest that we ought not to struggle with trying to figure out what “most” is for a given opportunity. God will make the most of any effort we make. The key is being mindful of the opportunity, having an attitude of making Christ known in some way, and being brave enough to make an effort. I believe this mindset is seen in Paul’s words to the Corinthians:

*“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view... we are therefore, Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” (2 Cor. 5:16, 20)*

**To consider:**

As you go about your day, be mindful of your conduct. How you act toward outsiders is an important part of the proclamation of gospel. It’s not as much what you *don’t* do as what you *do* do. Be wise in your behavior, and have the mind of Christ in your view of others today.

## Day 5: Conversation & Evangelism

Read Colossians 4:6.

While actions speak louder than words (or so it has been said), words still need to be spoken. When it comes to sharing our faith, or at least building bridges to our faith, conversation is a must. Paul had special instructions regarding our conversation with unbelievers. What two aspects are brought out?

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Conversation that is full of grace in this context is about being gracious, considerate, affirming, encouraging, etc. The description of salt in our conversation according to some commentators relates to interesting conversation – something more than small talk – conversation that piques one’s interests. There is little more attractive than gracious and interesting conversation to generate an interest in the gospel. Spiritual conversation is sometimes a hotbed for arguments, but when carried out graciously, people listen.

**To consider:**

If you want to make the most of the opportunities God gives, consider how and what you say to others. Is it more than small talk? Is it interesting? Is it gracious? Consider those things as you meet with others today.

## Day 6: Review

Look over your notes from the past week. What one or two things did God impress upon you this week?

# Home Group Questions

Week of November 17, 2008

## Reaching Out: Engaging the World

To us, Christ's followers, is given the responsibility of proclaiming the message of God's redeeming love to the world. It begins with our hearts aligning with God's. He loves the world. It continues with prayerful dependence on God to do what we cannot. And it concludes with action on our part to proclaim the message without getting in the way. That is our journey this week... a journey that will begin with proper preparation and end with faith that God will work through our efforts.

Opening: How have you seen God work this week?

1. Read Colossians 1:19-20. What does this say about God's plan for His creation?
2. God created the world. And despite all of its ugliness, it has an endearing quality to Him. God so loved his creation that he wants to redeem it back for Himself -- not because the world deserves it, but because He is its Creator, and He loves what He created. He may not be pleased with the direction it is going, but it is His creation nonetheless, and He is purposing to bring it back to Himself. Where is it difficult for you to see the endearing qualities of God's creation?
3. Read Colossians 4:2-4. What two things does Paul ask for in his prayer?  
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4. What does this say about the need for prayer in our witness?
5. Are there people in your life that you would like to share Christ with, but are afraid that you will fail or that your words might fall on deaf ears? Share with one another and add this to your prayer list during the week. Pray for an open door and boldness in these relationships.
6. Read Colossians 4:5. What are the two thoughts in this verse?  
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7. What does "wise conduct" toward outsiders look like? What does it look like with the gospel in view? On the flipside, what does unwise conduct look like?
8. Paul says to make the most of every opportunity. What are some examples of opportunities in your life from the past several weeks where wise conduct played or could have played a role in making the most of the occasion?

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9. Read Colossians 4:6. What two aspects of our conversation with outsiders are brought out in this verse?

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What do these two characteristics look like in a conversation?

How have you seen these characteristics lead toward spiritual conversation?

In addition, consider the following questions:

- How have you struggled this week?
- How can the others in the group help you?