

FISHERS OF MEN // No Other Name

Jesus invites us in **Matthew 4:19**, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Throughout this series, we've been working our way through five missional practices that we see in and around the life of Jesus that are so practical and simple, yet incredibly powerful as it relates to becoming fishers of men.

And God's strategy to reach the world, through the nation of Israel and through the body of Christ, through His church, was and is a "Blessing Strategy." The five missional practices we're talking about spell out the word.

B.L.E.S.S.

B - Begin with Prayer

L - Listen without Judgment

E - Eat Some Meals

S - Serve Others

S - Share Our Story

In Mark 5, Jesus heals a man, sets him free, and instructs him.

Mark 5:19, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you."

Step one wasn't a series of classes on how to be a Christian. He didn't make sure the guy had all the right theology first. He didn't teach him how to understand the Old Testament scriptures. All he had was *Jesus healed me and set me free*, and that was enough. And if you belong to Jesus, this is true of you.

And as it relates to sharing your story, if all you have is... *I don't know how, I don't know why, but Jesus healed me and set me free*... if that's all you have, it's enough.

For about three years Jesus had been intentionally investing in his 12 disciples. He had been teaching them, empowering and training them, and preparing them for the mission He had for them.

Every now and then, He'd explain to them, "Remember, the whole reason we're doing this is because one day, I'm going to lay down my life, I'm going to be killed, but three

days later, I'm coming back. I'm going to be raised from the dead, I'm going to conquer death itself. So, when that happens, don't worry, I'm coming back. I came here for this purpose! To pay the final price for the sin of the world... to seek and save the lost, to forgive sins, to reconcile a lost, rebellious, and broken world to myself."

Jesus does exactly what He said He was going to do. He goes to the cross, lays down His life, you know what the disciples do while Jesus was still in the tomb? They're not running around reassuring everyone.

Three days after his crucifixion, where are His disciples?

John 20:19, "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews..."

What are they doing? They are hiding! They're terrified! They're cowering in fear behind locked doors. The truth is we all have our own objections and reasons why we don't want to share our faith with people that are far from God, but ultimately, all of those reasons boil down to one thing. **We're afraid.** We're afraid we'll say the wrong thing, or we won't know the answer to a question, we don't want to misrepresent Jesus or offend someone.

Just because I'm a pastor doesn't mean I don't struggle with this. Right after I came to Christ, I went back to my hometown in Pittsburgh and tried to share Christ with a bunch of friends from my pre-Jesus days.

A couple of them wrote me off. One of them looked at me and said, "*Oh no, you're not one of those born-again Christians, are you?*" I said, "*That's exactly what I am.*" Looking back, I might have exercised a little bit more curiosity and asked, "*What does that mean to you?*" to be able to differentiate between the negative perception they had from what I was meaning.

And even now, just because I'm a pastor, it doesn't mean that I'm no longer a human being that deals with normal human emotions. When I meet someone new, or I strike up a conversation with someone, and I'm not sure what their background is, I hold back what I do for a living as long as I can because as soon as they find out I'm a pastor, I see it on their face, and I can feel the walls of Jericho coming back up! They either become really guarded or they just abruptly end the conversation, and it becomes really awkward.

Why is it that we're not more courageous in sharing our faith with others? Why do we tend to want to hide behind locked doors, just like the disciples did?

In John 20, there is one interaction, one moment that completely changed these men. One moment that filled them with unbelievable courage and boldness in a world that was far more hostile than the one we're in today.

John 20:19-20, "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"

Jesus is back! The tomb is empty! Death is conquered! He shows up just like He said He would. The same man that had been dead for the last few days is standing there in their midst. He just says, "*Peace be with you. Be at ease. Don't be afraid.*"

And after this event, after they encounter the resurrected Christ, the same men that were cowering in fear went all over the first century world **BOLDLY** proclaiming the good news of the gospel!

Peter denied Jesus three times, hiding behind locked doors, just a short while later. Prays for a cripple and God heals him. He's arrested and brought in for questioning by the high priest, the rulers, and scribes (who had the power to sentence them to death).

Acts 4:8-10, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'"

He is a different man! What happened? The resurrection of Jesus happened. The resurrection changed everything.

Later, the religious leaders are commanding them to stop telling people about Jesus, and the disciples just say, *yeah not gonna happen! Do with us what you will, but we won't stop talking about all of the things we've seen and heard.*

What's keeping us from speaking up about Jesus? People may say, *"This is what I don't like this about Christians. They're evangelizing, they're proselytizing, trying to convince people about Jesus."* What's funny about this kind of argument is we're all doing this all the time about all kinds of different things.

We share eagerly, willingly, boldly, without apology about the things that we believe deeply! We all do this!

And that reality begs the question: If we're not sharing the good news of Jesus with people, do we really believe it that deeply? Do we really believe it's good news?

Because Peter encounters the risen Christ and all of sudden, He went from timid and afraid to not being able to shut up about it!

Acts 4:13, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

If you want to grow in your boldness and willingness to share your faith with others...

1. Be with Jesus

Acts 4:13, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had **been with Jesus**."

There is no substitute for simply being with Jesus. Knowing Him and loving Him, being known by Him and being loved by Him. There is no replacement for beginning my day hearing from my heavenly father that I'm loved by Him. That's He's for me and not against me. That He's got a plan and purpose, not just for my life, but for my day.

That fills me with a boldness and security in the gospel that I cannot gain without being with Jesus.

2. Ask for Courage

Peter and John were imprisoned. They were in danger of being executed. Their lives were hanging in the balance, and you know what they didn't do? They didn't pray, "God keep us safe. Protect us." Look at what they ask for!

Acts 4:29, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

They ask for confidence and courage because they knew that when this life is all over, people will live somewhere forever. And whatever it is that they do with the person of Jesus will determine not only the kind of life they live here and now, but whether they spend eternity with God or without Him.

The reality is there is a place called Hell. A place of agony and unimaginable sorrow and people will either spend eternity there outside of the presence of the Author and Creator of love and life itself, or they'll spend eternity with Jesus in a place of unimaginable joy, life, fulfillment, peace, beauty, glory of heaven.

2 Corinthians 2:9, "...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him."

Revelation 21:1-5, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And He who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son.'"

This is the glory of Heaven that God has prepared for anyone and everyone who says YES to Jesus. Who follows Jesus! Do you believe this is waiting for you? That you and I can't even imagine how unbelievably good it's going to be?

Then how can we not share our faith with someone who doesn't yet know Him? How could we not share the gospel with our friend that may spend eternity without Jesus? How could we not do everything in our power to give every person every chance imaginable to say yes to Jesus?

Every single one of us has someone in our life that doesn't know Jesus, and let me tell you right now, it's not too late for them. The most loving thing you can do for someone far from God is invest the time, the relationship, love them no matter what, and walk through the door to share your faith. Because it's not too late right now, but one day, if we really believe what we say we believe, one day, it will be too late.

What if I share my faith and they reject me? What if I get it wrong, what if they say no? What if they say yes? What if you share your faith with them and they want to know more? What if Jesus gets a hold of their life, and God forgives them of their sin, just like He did for us? What if He gets a hold of their life and begins to make all things new? What if they say, "Yes," and He heals a broken marriage? Or reconciles an entire family? What if they say, "Yes" and they find purpose and meaning, and significance they've never had before?

Because the disciples were terrified, consumed with their own fear one moment, they encountered the risen Christ, and all of a sudden even the threat of death couldn't shut them up. For some of you, this is that moment. Ordinary people, empowered by the spirit of God, to share the love of God with a lost world.

When Jesus showed up in that room and encountered the disciples hiding behind locked doors, He looked at them after conquering death itself and said this...

John 20:21, "As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

If you're a follower of Jesus, He is sending us into the world to share the love of God with the world.