

Trinity Baptist Church  
Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
Andy Banks; How Can I Tell Others? Live, Seek, Love, Speak  
Romans 10:1-17

We're continuing our series based on the Christian Life and Witness Course. So far we've explored: Firstly, *why* we should share our faith with others – "Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all" (2 Corinthians 5:14); secondly, the practical example of Andrew, and how he naturally went out and *brought people to Jesus*; thirdly, the effective Christian life that must lie behind our faith-sharing, namely a *Spirit-filled life*; and last week, what we can learn from Philip about what the Spirit's infilling looks like. Today, we'll begin to explore *how* we can share our faith with others. But let's read first from Romans 10:1-17.

**[Read Romans 10:1-17]**

*1Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

*5Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "Whoever does these things will live by them." 6But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7"or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9if you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." 12For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

*14How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

*16But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

**[Pray]**

The Christian Life and Witness Course begins this section with some pertinent and challenging questions:

- Do you have faith in the power and sovereignty of God?
- Do you believe that the Holy Spirit will guide you, making you courageous ... and moving in the lives of those you speak to?
- Do you believe that the word of God is living and *powerful*, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12)?

- Do you believe that “the gospel ... is the *power* of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16)

The booklet continues: “If you can respond positively to those questions, then witnessing can be relatively *easy*.” That’s primarily because witnessing to our faith is not our idea: it’s God’s. *He* wants to make himself known to all people, but he loves to give you and I the privilege of being involved in that. Romans 10:15 asks the question, “How can anyone preach unless they are sent?” But we have all *been* sent – Jesus commissioned *all* of his disciples, “Go and make disciples ...” (Matt 28:18). And the authority in which we go is *Christ’s* authority, not our own. Yet, Romans 10:14 rightly asks, “How can they believe in the one of whom they have not *heard*?” And, ultimately, the degree of urgency we feel in sharing our faith will depend upon the degree to which we truly believe Jesus’ declaration, “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

But enough of the why. Many of us *want* to share our faith but feel ill-equipped to do so. So, *how* can we share our faith? One simple maxim is, “Live, Seek, Love, Speak.”

#### 1) Live: Witness with your life

Firstly, *live*. The first gospel that anyone will ever experience – aside from what they can glean from the witness of nature – is what they see of it in our lives. Peter writes: “Live such *good* lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:11-12). And Paul writes: “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God *without fault* in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will *shine among them* like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” (Philippians 2:14-16).

Mark Greene, in his fabulous book, *Thank God It’s Monday*, recounts an experience that a Christian lawyer named Lewis Tippett had one day at work, when a lady he had never met before from the accounts department walked into his office. After establishing who he was, she said to him, “You’re the only one in this department with any integrity. Don’t change. Everyone else abuses their expenses.” And she walked out. Whether it’s at work or in the home or anywhere else, people should be able to see that there is something different about us, and that something different should be positive – integrity, compassion, refusal to gossip, hard work, good listening, love. Even if people don’t connect our good behaviour to our faith, it matters not, for we live our lives for God’s eyes, to please him. But sometimes simply living a Spirit-filled, God-pleasing life opens opportunities to share our faith. The opposite is also true: if our life does not reflect the gospel we preach, then our life-witness will put people off from the Jesus we want to draw them to.

#### 2) Seek: Pray for open doors

So we *live* the gospel, and secondly, we *seek*. You can really hear Paul’s breaking heart for his people in the opening verses of Romans 10: “my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” Do you hear the urgency and desperation? How urgently do we seek for opportunities to share the good news about Jesus? The contents of our prayer life will give us a good indication, for we seek opportunities first and most importantly on our knees in prayer. And it’s amazing the opportunities that God will bring our way if we earnestly pray for them – often unexpected opportunities.

I think I’ve told you before about how, when at Meopham School, I went to discuss with my colleague a pupil we were both supporting, she ushered me into her office and asked my perspective, as a *Christian*, as to why

she was going through such a tough time: was God punishing her for not believing in him? She shared what was tough. We talked about the problem of suffering and the importance of faith and about Jesus. I'd love to say she got down on her knees and repented. She didn't. But she did listen and thank me for the conversation. I believe the secret to that open door was the prayers I prayed regularly, "Jesus, I'm available for you to use me today, help me to be a good witness for you." Of course, we should also pray that he gives us the eyes to see the opportunities when they arise, the *courage* to take them, and the *wisdom* to make the most of them.

### 3) Love: Be interested in their lives

Live, seek, and thirdly, love. Nobody wants to have the gospel blasted at them like a man standing on a parapet blowing his trumpet. What they want, and need, is compassion. And not compassion in order to gain the opportunity to speak the Gospel, just compassion for the sake of compassion. That means that the most important organs in our body if we want to share the gospel are our ears. Listen to what people say. Listen not just with physical ears, but with spiritual ears. Ask God to show you what their core need is. She might be complaining about her husband's boss always asking him to work late, but the real need may be emotional loneliness. He might be stressed that his children are so defiant, but the real need might be a feeling of inadequacy or helplessness.

Often, these days we need to *earn the right* to speak about Jesus. But the wonderful truth is that, when we listen like this, we usually get the opportunity to speak afterwards. And if we've truly listened, what we say will likely have a positive impact, because we will be able to relate the gospel to what they are experiencing.

### 4) Speak

Live, seek, love, and lastly, of course, we do need to speak. The saying incorrectly attributed to St Francis Assisi ("Preach the gospel; if necessary use words") is incomplete. It is not possible to preach the gospel fully without words, for "faith comes from *hearing* the message and the message is heard through the *word* about Christ" (Romans 10:17). Equally, salvation is not possible without words, for "if you *declare* with your *mouth*, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9). So, we must speak, but *what* should we speak?

#### a) Present the person of Christ

Obviously, as I've just said, that should depend on the situation we are speaking into. Remember Philip with the Ethiopian: he started where he was "with that very passage of Scripture ..." And what did he tell him? "The good news *about Jesus*" (Acts 8:35). That's the first and most important principle in sharing our faith – we have to share Jesus. One way we can do that is by sharing our testimony about how Jesus has changed our life – relevant to the situation of course. But we aren't sharing a formula, we're sharing a *person*: Jesus Christ. A person who came to share in the mess of our world; who took that mess on himself when he died; who conquered the power of death; who is coming again to make the world right; a person who is knowable and knows us intimately; who loves us intensely despite knowing all our faults; and who longs to accompany us through all of life's ups and downs. Is there anyone *more* relevant to the struggles our friends are going through than him? Present the person of Jesus.

#### b) Stress the love of God

Secondly stress the love of God. Some people do need to be confronted with their sin, so that they might see that they need a Saviour. But most people are already all-too aware of it. Either way, what all people need is to know that Jesus is a great, unimaginably loving Saviour. The core of the gospel is not hell, but the *cross* by

which the power of hell was overcome! The *cross*, by which God definitively declared, “I am *for* you!” Stress the love of God.

c) **Keep it simple**

Thirdly, keep it simple. Don't try to share everything at once. Don't think you need to present a philosophical argument or a theological dissertation. Just talk about Jesus, what he means to you, and what benefit he can bring to the person you're talking with. As Paul said to the Corinthians: “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” New babies need milk, not solid food. So, too, those who are new to hearing about the Christian faith. Don't assume that someone will understand Christian terms; instead try to explain your faith in simple, everyday language.

d) **Don't be afraid to open Scripture with people.**

Fourthly, don't be afraid to open Scripture with people. Remember “the Word of God is living and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12). God speaks through his inspired Word often more clearly than through *our* words *about* his Word. And if there is anything negative to be said, it's God saying it, not you! In addition, it can be very useful to learn some key memory verses to share. For instance, if someone is seeking to know the meaning of life, you could do worse than to quote John 3:16: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not die but have eternal life.” Or if someone thinks that they have to earn their way to heaven, why not share Romans 10:9: “if you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

e) **Remember the results are not up to you**

Lastly, remember the *results* are not up to you. Your responsibility as one whom God has sent, is to live and speak the Gospel. It is *God's* responsibility to bring someone to faith. And he alone can do that! Paul says the same about the Israelites – not all of them *believed*. If *Jesus' own* words were not always believed, why should we expect ours to be. If you seek for opportunities to share your faith, you will face disappointments. If you invite someone to the God Loves You Tour, they *might* decline. That doesn't mean that it was wrong to ask them, and it doesn't mean that God will not use your courage at some future point when they *are* ready to talk about Jesus. But, sometimes when we speak, God opens their hearts to believe, just as he opened my heart and yours. And if he does, we will obviously rejoice more about the conversation, but we can take no more credit for it than for the conversation that goes nowhere. For if someone becomes a Christian, it is not because of our words, but because God the Holy Spirit convicts them of their need for him.

So, *live* the gospel, *seek* opportunities to share the gospel, *love* people and *speak*, lovingly and simply about Jesus, using Scripture if appropriate. Live, seek, love, speak. God will do the rest. Amen?

**[Pray**

**Offer opportunity for prayer ministry]**