

## ADVANCING THE KINGDOM (Step 3)

### ADVANCING THE KINGDOM (Step 3) The Great Commission - *Sharing Your Love Story*

The last few devotionals have focused on **God's 3-Step Plan** for Advancing the Kingdom. **Step 1** focused on **The Great Commitment** - *Praying for our Neighbors* (1 Timothy 2:1-4). **Step 2** focused on **The Great Commandment** - *Caring for our Neighbors* (Mark 12:28; Matthew 22:19). Last month we focused on the first part of **Step 3 - The Great Commission** - *Sharing the "Good News" with our Neighbors* (Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 3:15) during those brief encounters the Lord provides. Today, we are focusing on sharing the "Good News" after developing a friendship. Your personal love story or testimony of how God called you and drew you to Himself is one of the most effective and compelling ways of sharing your faith once a relationship has been established.

After ministering to a man, Jesus told him, "*Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you*" (Mark 5:19). He wants us to verbally share His love with our neighbors and invite them to invite Him into their hearts. Your personal love story of how Jesus called you and drew you to Himself has the potential of changing your neighbor's life for eternity. Do so with all those as the Spirit prompts. Just as it is natural and enjoyable to share personal happenings, unusual adventures, and life-changing experiences, it should be natural and enjoyable to share your testimony.

In Acts 22, The Apostle Paul shared his testimony to lead others to Christ by explaining who he was before meeting Jesus, what Jesus did for him, and the joy that he now had because of Jesus. This is one of the most effective ways to share your faith. People can argue about historical facts and disagree over cultural details, but they cannot argue with the fact that you found love, joy, and forgiveness when you met Christ. Paul divided his testimony/love story into three parts and I suggest you do the same.

#### **(1) Your Life Before Knowing Jesus** (*Acts 22:1-5*)

When developing your love story, be sure to identify with your listeners. Tell them about yourself in a way that they can easily relate. Expose areas in your life in which they may identify:

**no purpose - loneliness - anger - sinful habits - selfishness - pride**

Build the first part of your love story around one or two areas. Be factual, personal and brief. As you share, use words they will understand and steer clear of Christianese.

#### **(2) How You Came To Know Jesus** (*Acts 22:6-16*)

Tell them why you became a follower of Jesus. At the center of everyone's heart is a longing that only God can satisfy. We try to satisfy that longing in numerous ways, but they never deliver lasting happiness and contentment because we went our own way, not His way, and missed the mark. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life.*" (John 14:6).

As you share, make it clear that:

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- ◆ **You had a problem**

You sinned (missed the mark) (*Romans 3:23*)

The result (*Romans 6:23a*)

- ◆ **Jesus had a solution**

Jesus loved you (*Romans 5:8*)

Jesus provided you a gift (*Romans 6:23b*)

Jesus is the way back to the Father (*John 14:6*)

- ◆ **Your Response**

You confessed (*John 1:9*)

You repented (*Acts 3:19*)

You believed & received (*Romans 10:9; John 1:12*)

### **(3) How Knowing Jesus Has Changed Your Life** (*Acts 22:17-22*)

Tell them how Jesus has helped you address sensitive issues. If there are areas where you still struggle, be honest and share that you are a work in progress and how Jesus is helping you overcome your struggles.

Sharing your own personal love story should be freeing and remove any personally imposed pressure or fear you may feel. Jesus just wants you to share about your personal relationship with Him.

The Scriptures tell us to always be prepared to share our love story as part of God's love story (1 Peter 3:15). "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*"

Write out your own love story inside God's love story in 400-800 words. Practice saying it within a 3-6 minute time frame.

Can evangelism, that much dreaded word that makes people cringe, ignore, shun away from or steer clear of, be that simple? Could praying for, loving on, and sharing our own love story with our neighbors be what is missing and so sorely needed by the Holy Spirit in drawing people to Jesus? I think so!

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**The Great Commission**, our everyday commission, is to share our love story with our neighbors. Could it be that we are not doing so because we are not practicing Step 2, **The Great Commandment** - to truly love the Lord with all our hearts, minds and souls and love our neighbors as ourselves? **Think about it!**

**Will you join Jesus on His Mission? Will you focus on fulfilling Jesus' 3-Step Plan to advance the Kingdom?** One of the final questions Jesus asked one of those He loved was, "*Do you love Me?*" (John 21:17a) Two of His final commands were, "*Feed My sheep.*" (John 21:17b) and "*Follow Me!*" (John 21:19).

### PRAYER

Father, thank you for loving me and saving me. Though I had gone my own way, you sought me out and saved me. Please give me the love and courage I need to share my own love story with others. Forgive me for the times you gave me opportunities, but I did not obey the prompting of the Spirit. Open my spiritual eyes and speak to my heart as I ponder this serious matter of your Lordship in my life.

**Dave Dagwell**

Assistant to the President