

Faith In Community, February 25, 2006
THE JESUS JOURNEY: SEVEN THINGS TO PACK
“Tell About Your Trip”, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
By Al Conway

CHARTING THE COURSE (5 minutes)

“God has given you a Life Message to share....Shared stories build a relational bridge that Jesus can walk across from your heart to theirs....The Bible says, “Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.” The best way to “be ready” is to write out your testimony and then memorize the main points. Divide it into four parts:

- 1. What my life was like before I met Jesus*
- 2. How I realized I needed Jesus*
- 3. How I committed my life to Jesus*
- 4. The difference Jesus has made in my life.*

“Of course, you have many other testimonies besides your salvation story. You have a story for every experience in which God has helped you. You should make a list of all the problems, circumstances, and crises that God has brought you through. Then be sensitive and use the story that your unbelieving friend will relate to best. Different situations call for different testimonies.”

--Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life

UNPACKING TRAIT #6: PROCLAIMER. A PROCLAIMER portrays the transforming power of God. (5 minutes for the questions below)

Who, in your past, has shared his or her faith with you?
What was most helpful about that experience?

COME, FOLLOW ME . . . (20 minutes)
Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica thanking them for their faith and their work of faith. He is thankful for their successful ministry in their area, that his teachings were not in vain and that God’s love was evident in their lives by their reception of the gospel. It’s important to note that they didn’t just hear the gospel, but that it touched their hearts with **power**. It moved that six inches from the head to the heart!

How has God’s Word affected your heart?

Can you remember a time when a familiar scripture “all of a sudden” made sense?

These Godly people were careful to imitate the good examples of the apostles and ministers of Christ. Who do you admire and wish to imitate, and why?

The believers in Thessalonica were examples to those who surrounded them; their influence reached beyond their local church. They took the gospel to many areas and regions. How and where can we at BAUMC set examples?

AT THE CROSSROAD: WHERE “PROCLAIMING” CONNECTS WITH LIFE (20 minutes)

Read Romans 1:16-17. Paul felt no shame in the message of Christ; here again we see that the gospel has the **power** to change lives. Have you ever been embarrassed or felt uneasy to be identified as a follower of Jesus? What would your coworkers and other acquaintances say about your willingness to share your faith? What chance is there that some think you are ashamed or embarrassed by your faith?

In 1 Peter 3:15 We are directed to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”. Are you prepared? Have you written out your faith journey? If not, would this be the time to do it? Someone may ask you about it today and your answer could be the difference between eternal life and eternal darkness. Peter also reminds us to be “gentle and respectful” when we share Christ with others. Has there been a time that you were “turned off” by an over zealous Christian witness? How could they have approached you in gentleness and with respect?

Read Acts 2:46-47. Does the faith you celebrate on Sunday sometimes feel disconnected from the “real world” you face on Monday? The early believers closed that gap by doing two things: *gathering* for growth and worship balanced by *scattering* into the world for work and to communicate the gospel to their non-Christian friends and coworkers. This pattern continues throughout the Book of Acts. The narrative moves back and forth between internal meetings of the church and external encounters with the surrounding culture. How can we use this pattern to keep us connected yet be out in the world?

Discuss ways we can make a link between our Sunday faith community and the demands of your Monday to Saturday world?

Read **Matthew 28:16-20.** Why do you think Jesus proclaims his authority before commanding us to evangelize the world?

What does Jesus tell us to do? (look at the action words)

When you think of personal evangelism what fears come to mind? How does Jesus' promise calm those fears?

STEPS IN MY PERSONAL JOURNEY (10 minutes)

We bear the constant knowledge that God created humans as eternal beings. All those who are alive right now will live forever---with Jesus, or separated from Him. Therefore, we are compelled to share our faith. That sharing may be as casual as two friends conversing over a cup of coffee, or as dramatic as a street corner sermon.

(excerpts from Sharing your Faith by Carolyn Nystrom)

Take some time to silently reflect on the "Journey Path" in your devotional. Consider where you are on the path. What step(s) will you take to intentionally grow as a "proclaimer" during "The Jesus Journey"? Circle the step and the scripture. If you are led to take a step that is not on the path, write or draw this in. Use this reflection page to guide you through the week. If there is time, share your "next step" with the class.

MARKERS IN THE ROAD (5 minutes)

Read or sing the following hymn together.

We've a Story to Tell to the Nations

1. We've a story to tell to the nations, that shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and mercy, a story of peace and light, a story of peace and light.

Refrain:

For the darkness shall turn to dawning, and the dawning to noonday bright; and Christ's
great kingdom shall come on earth, the kingdom of love and light.

2. We've a song to be sung to the nations, that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
a song that shall conquer evil and shatter the spear and sword, and shatter the spear and
sword.

3. We've a message to give to the nations, that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us, and show us that God is love, and show us that God is
love.

5. We've a Savior to show to the nations, who the path of sorrow hath trod,
That all of the world's great peoples might come to the truth of God, might come to
the truth of God.

It is said "**Faith is never more than one generation away from extinction**"