

Introduction



HOW TO SHARE CHRIST

We often find it challenging to share our faith with others, don't we? Some of us find it awkward to initiate conversations about Jesus. It doesn't help that our culture lifts up the value of "having it your way." In a world that tells people to "do whatever pleases you," it can feel intimidating to share Jesus.

We don't need to be intimidated. In this study, we will see both the importance and the responsibility of sharing our faith in Christ. The goal of this study is to better equip us to share about Jesus in practical and engaging ways, and to extend an invitation to others to know about the priceless gift we have received.

Join me in seeing ourselves as a "newsfeed" of what Jesus has done for us. In the same way we look to news outlets to keep us informed about what's going on in the world, so we can also be a newsfeed, revealing the message and story of Christ through the pages of our own lives. Our lives add to the chapters of HIStory!

Share Jesus Without Fear, by Bill Fay, (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1997), has been used by thousands of people to provide practical insights to help in sharing the love of Jesus with others. Throughout this study you will see excerpts from this book to supplement the Bible study content.

MARSELLE JACKSON WILBURN

Marshelle is a speaker, author, leadership trainer, and urban missionary in the San Francisco Bay Area. She partners with her husband, Port, in church planting, associational missions, and marriage and family coaching. Both California natives, they have five children.

SESSION 1

Our Commission



QUESTION 1:

What's the biggest news you've ever had to try to keep secret?

THE POINT

God sends us to tell others about Jesus.

THE PASSAGES

Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

For two decades, my husband and I ran our own business. We had a legal service, preparing and delivering documents for clients (plaintiffs) who had legal actions against someone (defendants). We were process servers, which meant we had the task of delivering the bad news of a lawsuit or court action.

It wasn't an easy business; in fact, it could be dangerous, depending on how people responded to the "bad" news we delivered. It was important for both our clients and the recipients, though, that we deliver the message. Plaintiffs could not move forward with legal action if all parties were not notified. And if defendants weren't properly notified, they would be unaware of the legal proceedings and their need to respond, causing further legal action, debt, or even incarceration.

God expects His followers to carry His important message to the world. Though it may be challenging and not always received well, it's vital to provide an opportunity for others to respond to a life or death situation. What we're sharing is not bad news, however; it's good news.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

KEY WORDS: **The end of the world** (Matt. 28:20)—A reference to Jesus' bodily return to earth at the end of time.

Consider the word *commission*. The prefix *com-* means “together, with, jointly.” The word *mission* means a specific task a person or group is charged with doing. A commission, then, is a task we are given to do *together*. This passage is commonly referred to as the Great Commission, so in light of the word “commission,” we should see Jesus' command as a command to join together with Him in the specific task of making disciples.

Jesus gave this command to the disciples before He ascended to heaven to help them understand they would have a task and purpose after He left. Knowing what to do and knowing how to do it can be quite different, though. The disciples may have been wondering: *How are we supposed to accomplish this and make disciples?* Many of us today may wonder the same thing.

Look at the first thing Jesus told the disciples in these verses. He didn't focus on their abilities, experience, or confidence. Instead, He focused on the authority His Father had given Him. Before even giving them the command to disciple others, Jesus assured them He had all authority “in heaven and in earth.” As the Father had given Jesus authority, Jesus now gave authority to the disciples—

and to those who would follow them in faith. By Jesus' authority, we are enlisted and empowered to go and continue His mission.

The second part of Jesus' commission was His charge to His disciples—and it was a charge to action. Jesus didn't leave us to figure out this mission on our own. Fulfillment of the God-given Great Commission is accomplished in this way:

- ▶ **How**—By His authority.
- ▶ **What**—Make disciples, which includes baptizing and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us to do.
- ▶ **Where**—“Go” calls us to make disciples wherever we are.
- ▶ **Who**—Anyone and everyone. We are to “teach all nations.”

We need to trust in His authority and abide in His presence to fulfill the commission of making disciples. Making disciples can appear a difficult task, but we can overcome discouragement and fear as we stay focused on the promise of Jesus' authority and continual presence. Our goal is to be obedient and disciple others as we go through life, whether we immediately see the fruit of our efforts or not. We have the privilege of joining the original disciples as God's instruments in accomplishing His divine plan.

QUESTION 2:

What are some obstacles to people engaging in the Great Commission?

2 Corinthians 5:16-19

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

KEY WORDS: **The ministry of reconciliation** (2 Cor. 5:18)—For Paul, ministry was an act of service. Specifically, believers serve others by leading them toward a restored relationship with God through Christ.

Ever noticed how people get excited about a new relationship in their lives? The guy can't wait to tell about the girl he met. It's the same for followers of Christ. Our life-transforming encounter—the excitement, promise, hope, and love of Christ—is something we don't want to keep to ourselves.

We have many ways to share the gospel, but nothing is quite like word of mouth. One of the most effective forms of advertisement is word of mouth because it allows people to decide based on someone else's personal experience. Before purchasing an item, many of us first check the customer reviews.

The story of our encounter with Christ is a powerful word-of-mouth “review.” Think about your experience.

**Share Jesus Without Fear:
Six Fears That Keep People
from Sharing Their Faith**

1. I'm afraid of being rejected.
2. I'm afraid of what my friends will think.
3. I don't think I can share with my co-workers.
4. I don't know enough.
5. I'm afraid of losing my friends and relatives.
6. I don't know how to share my faith.

How did you hear about Jesus Christ? Most of us know about Jesus because someone told us.

We'd be selfish if we didn't share the saving knowledge of Christ with others—but many of us are hesitant to do so. Some of the reasons we don't share are these:

- ▶ Fear of rejection.
- ▶ Fear of offending someone.
- ▶ Fear of not being able to share effectively.

We have these fears because some people see God as an enemy. Jesus is not of this world, and neither are His followers, but we need not be afraid because we are not left alone when we talk to others. As we saw in the Great Commission, Jesus is with us! In addition, Jesus transforms us into new creations. The old self may feel inadequate, but your encounter with Christ means your life changes. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, He changes everything about you: your focus, your priorities, and your values, to name just a few.

Because we were God's enemies, we were separated from Him. But when we received the gift of salvation, we were reconciled to God. Our personal reconciliation to God involves the complete restoration of our relationship with our Creator and Savior. As we have been reconciled to God, He has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

Our "yes" to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior positions us for ministry. All believers in Christ are called to ministry, which includes the ministry of reconciliation. Our objective is to share with others the same gift we received: being reunited with and restored to God. As those entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, God has given us the privilege of becoming an agent of good news to others.

QUESTION 3:

In what ways have you been made new as a result of following Jesus?

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Sports fans can be a crazy bunch of people, which is why they're called fans (fanatics). As a sports fan myself, I proudly wear my team colors and gear as though I was a player in the game. Though I know they can't hear my commentary, words of affirmation, or groans of disappointment, it doesn't keep me from yelling at the television or from the stands. Whether my team wins or loses, I remain a loyal, die-hard fan. I believe I represent my team well and proudly share my devotion to them with others.

As Christ followers, we're entrusted with a far greater responsibility than just being a fan. Yes, God wants us to be devoted, enthusiastic, and committed to reflect how we feel about Him, but more importantly, it's our responsibility to represent Jesus as His ambassadors. As ambassadors, we are to share Jesus' love and sacrifice; we are to call others to acknowledge their need and trust Him by faith.

Ambassadors represent far more than devotion and commitment. They're authorized agents, representatives, and messengers commissioned by a sovereign authority to represent that authority in dealings with others. As "ambassadors for Christ," we fully represent Him.

Although Christ had no sin, He obediently and humbly became sin for us to ensure we could be reconciled to God and brought into relationship with Him. Without Jesus Christ acting as an ambassador to a lost world, we'd never know about the loving grace and mercy of our Creator and our need for repentance and

redemption. Now as His ambassadors, we have been entrusted with calling others to that same love and mercy. We call them to these actions:

- ▶ Admit they are sinners (as we all are).
- ▶ Accept their need for the debt of their sin to be paid.
- ▶ Acknowledge Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for their redemption.
- ▶ Ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior.

QUESTION 4:

What does it mean for us to be Christ's ambassadors?

DIGGING DEEPER

AN AMBASSADOR'S ROLE

The word translated “ambassadors” is actually a verb—but definitely emphasizes the image of an ambassador and is true to the text’s intent. The noun translated “ambassador,” “delegate,” or “representative” is used twice in the New Testament. The general meaning of the term is “a person who has been given authority to communicate or to act on behalf of a ruler,” which is still today what an ambassador does. The term could refer to someone who had been appointed or designated to be the representative of another as a negotiator. The ambassador

was sent on a mission to represent the ruler for a specific purpose. Ambassadors could simply be “goodwill” representatives of the party sending them, thereby keeping the peace by a show of friendship and solidarity at times of celebration.

The context of 2 Corinthians 5:20 shows that Paul was using the imagery of an ambassador being sent to establish a peace agreement rather than being sent to celebrate. Paul and Timothy had the role as ambassadors to communicate God’s willingness to reach a peace agreement by which the Corinthian Christians would be reconciled to God.

William Warren, “An Ambassador’s Role,” *Biblical Illustrator*, Spring 2010, 37-39.

Our favorite teams may never know we're fans, but God knows each of us intimately and He desires to work through us. He desires the fullness of His presence in our lives to overflow into the lives of others. As His ambassadors, we are to let others see Jesus in us. Our grateful response to His salvation should move us to be ambassadors, sharing our joy in Christ so that others can discover that same joy.

QUESTION 5:

What strategies have helped you share Jesus with others?

ENGAGE

One of the ways believers can tell others about Jesus is to simply talk about what God is doing in our lives. Identify some of the things God has done for you recently that you can share with others.

In your family:

In your work:

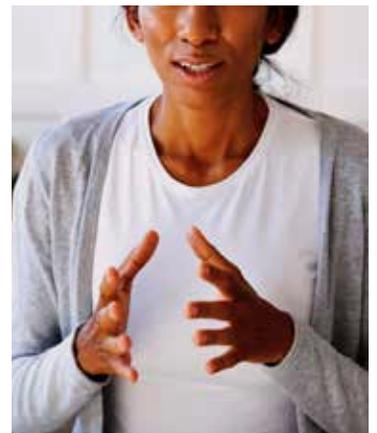
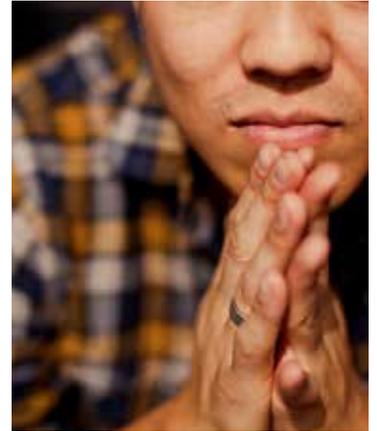
In your neighborhood:

In your church:

LIVE IT OUT

Telling others about Jesus can be challenging, but He's made you His own and has empowered you with all you need to carry out His charge.

- ▶ **Thank Him.** Thank God for His authority and the commission He's entrusted to you to represent Him and share His good news.
- ▶ **Trust Him.** We can overcome fears by giving them over to God. If you're challenged with sharing Jesus with others, pray and trust God to help you overcome your fears. Acknowledge and write down any fears, concerns, or needs you want Him to help you overcome. Pray and trust Him to move.
- ▶ **Tell of His love.** As you meet people during the week, be bold and just ask, "Has anyone told you Jesus loves you? He does and I just wanted to let you know."





RECONCILIATION: A WORD STUDY

By Bobby Kelly

To overestimate the importance of “reconciliation” language in Paul’s understanding of the work of God in Christ would be difficult. Indeed, some scholars argue that reconciliation is the center of Paul’s theology.¹ It as *the* center might be too strong, but the point remains that God’s work of making peace with sinful, hostile human beings through the blood of Christ’s cross is a central component of Paul’s theology.

SECOND CORINTHIANS 5:11-21—IN CONTEXT

Continual conflict brewed between the church at Corinth and its founder, Paul, in regard to his apostleship. Not surprisingly, therefore, the apostle highlighted God’s work of making peace in every correspondence with them.²

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, how much more now reconciled will we be saved by His [Christ’s] life; but not only this, but also we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received reconciliation.”

In the context of Paul’s sober but hopeful reflection on his ministry in Corinth, Paul penned 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, his preeminent treatment of reconciliation. In verses 11-17, Paul began by defending the motivation for his ministry. Christ’s love, expressed on the cross and revealed to Paul on the Damascus Road, compelled Paul to sacrifice all for Christ. In the death of the one Man, Jesus Christ, all died, and in His death a new order had dawned, a new creation marked by the restoration of broken relationships.

WORD STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Paul focused attention squarely on reconciliation. He employed the noun “reconciliation” (Greek, *katallage*) twice and the verb “to reconcile” (*katallasso*) three times. The Greek terms are compound words consisting of

the preposition *kata* (meaning “in,” “with,” or “toward”) and the noun *allos* (meaning “to make otherwise”). These, the primary terms for reconciliation in the Greek New Testament, appear 10 times, only in Paul (aside from 2 Cor. 5:10-21, see also 1 Cor. 7:11; Rom. 5:8-11; 11:15). A variation of the word, made by adding the Greek preposition *apo* (meaning “away from”), occurs elsewhere three times (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-22).³ In every instance the term denotes a change in relations between individuals from anger, hostility, and alienation to love, friendship, and peace. In Greek literature outside of the New Testament, the term appears rather infrequently, typically conveying the idea of reconciliation between human beings. The word was used in this “social” sense in the New Testament only in 1 Corinthians 7:11, where Paul insisted that a woman

who had left her spouse “be reconciled to her husband.”⁴ The exception to the social usage outside the New Testament is 2 Maccabees, where the verb *katallasso* appears three times (1:5; 7:33; 8:29). In each case, the reconciliation is between sinful Israelites and their God.⁵

Thus, the typical person living in first-century Corinth would have understood the word to refer to the exchange of hostility for peace between individuals or groups alienated from one another. In contrast, Paul employed the term almost exclusively with reference to God acting in Christ to reconcile human beings to Himself. In Romans 5:1-11, Paul drew two other crucial concepts together with reconciliation in a way that helps us understand more fully the depth of what God has done for us in Christ. In Romans 5:1, Paul asserted that because we have been justified, “we have peace with God.” The term “peace” comes close to the heart of reconciliation and is anticipated Romans 5:10-11: “For if while we were enemies

we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, how much more now reconciled will we be saved by His [Christ’s] life; but not only this, but also we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received reconciliation.” This important passage presents at least three valuable truths. First, Paul tied together justification, peace, and reconciliation. When we realize the overlap between these terms, we begin to see the depth of Christ’s work. Rather than arguing which has more importance, perhaps we should glory equally in our justification, our reconciliation, and our peace with God. These terms provide the fabric out of which we can weave the doctrine of the atonement, that is “at-one-ment.” Second, Paul highlighted the plight of humanity’s hostility and enmity with God. He was not saying that human beings were putting forth a good-faith effort in order to please God, leading God to act on our behalf. On the contrary, while we were hostile enemies with God, God acted to reconcile us to Himself. Finally,

Paul highlighted the means by which our reconciliation is secured: “through the death of his son” (see also vv. 8-9).

Paul brought these elements together in a masterful way in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Paul began by asserting that God, the offended party, had initiated making peace with humankind, the offenders. Paul’s statement highlighted the Father’s glorious grace. The Lord acted on our behalf despite the fact we were responsible for the hostility with him because of our disobedience. In Christ, God did what humans were incapable of doing for themselves. Rather than counting our trespasses against us, God has acted to remove them. In so doing, for those who confess Jesus, God changes our status from enemy to friend. For Paul, however, being reconciled himself was not enough. He felt his ministry was to be an agent of reconciliation. This was an all-consuming responsibility for Paul. One final point in this text deserves mention. God’s work of reconciliation went

beyond simply making peace with human beings; “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (v. 19). While human beings were the primary focus of God’s work, there is a cosmic dimension. Paul reiterated this in Colossians 1:19-22. These words remind us of the powerful and destructive consequences of disobedience to God, not only for human beings, but for the entirety of God’s creation. In Christ, God made a way for persons to be at peace with God, but also to begin the process of remaking creation even more gloriously than the day God first declared it “good” (Gen. 1:3-31). This is the reconciliation to which we are all called.

1. See for example Ralph P. Martin, “Center of Paul’s Theology” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 94.
2. For a thorough review of Paul and his relationship with the Corinthians, see David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 26-33.
3. See Helmut Merkel, “katallasso, reconcile” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 261-62; and Friedrich Buchsel, “katallasso” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 254-58.
4. Scripture quotations are the author’s own translations.
5. “katallasso” in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 414.

Bobby Kelly is the Rowena Strickland associate professor of religion at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma.