

## Speaking of Jesus (Part Six): Telling the Jesus Story

By David Fields

The whole of the New Testament assumes that God's people are rubbing shoulders with one another and involved in the lives of their neighbours and coworkers. It also assumes that all of God's people are living as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), representing God and making the message of Jesus known throughout the world. Part of this 'priestly' ministry is, as Peter puts it, to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). In essence, preaching is speaking the message of Jesus with people who are not yet believers. So, whose task is this?

Ross Hastings puts it well: "Preaching is not reserved for the public teacher [i.e., pastor on a Sunday morning] but is the essence of what all God's people do as they articulate the *shalom* [the peace of God] they have entered, and as they explain their nonverbal missional endeavors." (*Missional God, Missional Church*). Our series, "Speaking of Jesus", has aimed at helping us, as a community, be prepared to do just that.

In this series we have seen these various elements:

1. We saw the call to be winsome in our witness; let our lives be 'attractive', showing the beauty of the gospel through how we live.
2. We talked about 'merging our universes' – about creating opportunities to connect our Christian friends with those who do not yet know Jesus personally – and that includes 'going to their things'.
3. We spoke about hospitality – about opening our homes and lives, listening well and asking good questions.
4. We saw how sharing our own stories of faith is so key to the process of helping people understand the Gospel.
5. We talked about being a "*de facto* chaplain" – being the sort of people who are willing and open to offer care and prayer with our co-workers, neighbours, and friends.
6. Finally, we looked at how we can share the story of Jesus and invite people to respond to the Gospel.

In our final study we'll look more closely at some practical ways to share the message of Jesus – presenting that hope by telling the story of Jesus in easy-to-understand ways.

**Open Up**

1. In what ways do you feel *most prepared* to give an answer for your hope? In what ways do you feel *least prepared*?
2. What elements of the series so far have been most helpful in shaping your thinking about the task of “speaking of Jesus” and why?

## Dig In

### I. Sharing the Gospel by telling the story of Jesus

In the message we looked at one way of sharing the content of the Gospel message using three parts of Jesus story. When I’ve shared this message with people, I’ve also interspersed some of these elements with specific stories of Jesus, or with parables that he tells, depending on the development of the conversation. Sometimes the conversation includes questions at each point, and clarification – so it’s not necessarily all said in one ‘chunk’ either.

Read through these points – try and imagine what it would be like to share these, in your own words, with a friend over coffee who asked more about your Christian faith.

1. **Manger – Jesus as God who has come as a human, to serve us.** *Jesus was a first century Jewish man, who walked around in ancient Israel, and he spoke Aramaic. He associates with our human pain, and yet is still fully God. Jesus taught people and healed many who were sick – he shows us that God deeply cares about us. The manger is a picture of how Jesus is God, who comes to us as a humble servant. (Here, I might use the example of Jesus turning water into wine, showing how the kingdom he is bringing is about joy and celebration – like a wedding feast; John 2).*
2. **Cross - Jesus dies for us, in our place, on a cross.** *Jesus, even though he never did anything wrong – the only person who could say that – he willingly dies on a Roman cross as the way of paying off the debt we owe. He sacrifices himself, out of love for us, so that we can be forgiven and freed from our guilt and welcomed as children of God. (Here I might share the story of the Prodigal Sons to demonstrate the restored relationship with God that is on offer; Luke 15).*
3. **King - Jesus was raised to life – and he lives as King.** *When we chose to be loyal to him, to trust him with our whole life allegiance – that’s what being a Christian means – we become a part of “team Jesus”, and we get to spread his love, his mercy, and his justice in our everyday lives. He doesn’t just come to associate with our human pain, he has come to bring an end to it, once and for all – to bring us back to God. And one day Jesus will come again to restore the earth and set up his peaceful reign forever. God is going to restore his world. And we can be part of that life for all eternity. (Here I might share the*

story of Zacchaeus and how after he encountered Jesus, he begins to work for restoration and healing; Luke 19).

**Discuss:**

4. How would you feel about sharing the message of Jesus in this kind of way? Why?
  
5. Read **John 20:30-31** and **Luke 1:1-4**. There is no single way to present the message of Jesus. However, as we see with the Gospel writers, they tell the *story* of Jesus as the main means of their evangelistic task, not just making theological points. What do you think would be the advantages of sharing the story of Jesus in this way in our culture as well?

## **II. Speaking of Jesus by sharing stories of Jesus or parables by Jesus**

Another helpful way to help someone who is interested in knowing more about Jesus is to tell them stories about Jesus from the Gospels or use the parables Jesus used, as mentioned in the above section.

When I'm having a conversation about Jesus, sometimes I simply read a story about Jesus' life from an easy-to-understand, modern translation of the Bible (I like the New Living Translation or the Message, which is a good paraphrase). Or, as is often the case, I'll put the story in my own words while staying true to the meaning and message of the scriptures.

After sharing a story, we might follow up by asking them the following questions (borrowed from Sam Chan):

1. What did you think of the story? What did you like in that story?
2. What questions do you have about the story?
3. What does that story teach about Jesus?
4. What does that story teach us about people?
5. If that story is true, what is God trying to teach you?

Note: the first two questions have no "right or wrong answer", and so they are simply an opportunity to hear the other person – to listen well.

Note also: we do not need to try and answer all their additional questions (#2 above) unless they particularly ask us to. Because we trust that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the Scriptures, we can often just leave the questions remaining, remembering that Jesus doesn't answer all the questions that his parables raise either. He allows the questions to 'work on us' and draw us to keep digging in deeper.

**Discuss:**

6. Read **Luke 18:9-14** twice. Here is a role-playing activity (this should take no more than 15 minutes total). In your Life Group, break into pairs and take turns restating the story in your own words with your partner. After you restate the story, practice asking the 5 questions listed above, and just listen to your partner's response.
  
7. After you have taken the time to each share the story and ask the questions, discuss as a group. What was it like to summarize that story in your own words? What was it like to listen to the story and answer the questions?

**Prayer:** As we wrap up this series, take some time to pray for those 3 or 4 people we started praying for on Part One. Pray also that the practices and habits we spoke of would become second nature for our community. Pray for each other's needs and the needs of our church community.