

Lift Ticket
5 Week Challenge
Week 5

Day 1

Devotional Thought:

Evangelism. What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear that term? Maybe it's someone with a bullhorn standing on a street corner? Maybe you think of those people who hold up signs outside of sporting events that say things like, "the end is near, repent!" It could be those people who come and knock on your door during dinner with their little pamphlets in hand. Maybe you picture one of those TV preachers with bad hair and whitened teeth? I don't know what you think of when you hear the term, but it's likely to have a negative connotation. Evangelism by definition is, "the spreading of the Christian Gospel by preaching or personal witness." Unfortunately, the methods people have employed to do that have had negative effects on people who do and don't follow Jesus. While bad methodology has turned off many people who don't follow Jesus, it's had, in some ways, an even greater effect on those of us who do follow Jesus. Instead of representing better methodology, we sometimes check out on evangelism entirely. It's very easy to say, "I don't want to cram Jesus down anyone's throat" or "I don't want to be one of those Christians" and so we don't share our faith with anyone, sometimes even those closest to us. If you think about it though, that doesn't make any sense. Essentially, we are saying that since other people do it wrong, we just won't do it at all. That's not even logical. This would be similar to leaving the sheep to the wolves. It may sound like a harsh metaphor, but in John chapter 10, Jesus equates the religious leaders of His day and their bad methodology to wolves. If we don't employ the methods of Jesus when telling people about Jesus, then we aren't really following, are we? Jesus taught differently, acted differently, and treated people differently than the religious leaders of His day. Yet, he didn't pull any punches. He always spoke the truth and extended Grace at the same time. We should do the same. If the Gospel really is "good news," then why would we not want to share it? If Jesus really is our only hope, then why would we not point people toward Him? Jesus is clear that our mission is to love God and love people, right? He said in John 20:21 that just as He was sent by the Father, He is sending us out to bring the awesome love of Jesus to a lost and broken world.

Question- "How does this decision accomplish my primary mission?"

- How does this filter clarify our decision making process?

Verse to remember: Acts 20:24 "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."

Day 2

Devotional Thought:

I once confronted a guy on a street corner who was shouting at people while holding a huge bible. This bible had to weigh 40 pounds, and he had an equally gaudy cross hanging around his neck. I actually got the whole exchange on video. I was across the street filming a video at a local coffee shop when we noticed him. I quickly asked our camera guy if my microphone would still work if I crossed the street and if he could zoom in well from that far away. He answered with a resounding yes on both counts. The man had no idea we were filming him, which I'm sure is illegal in some way, but oh well. I figured he probably wouldn't have cared anyway, but I wanted to get his real reaction which may have been compromised had he known we were filming. I asked him lots of different questions like, "Why are you doing this?" "How often do you do this?" etc. The most poignant moment, however, was when I asked him, "How many people have come to Jesus through your street preaching?" His response was, "I don't care about people coming to Jesus." Plain and simple, yet astounding. It turns out what this guy cared about was himself. He was trying to prove that he was courageous, willing to be made to look foolish, and sacrifice for God. If anyone actually benefited or connected with the real life giving savior didn't really matter to him. While most of us probably won't go buy a huge Bible and Cross matching set and stand on the street corner yelling at people, it is possible for us to be equally obnoxious. The Bible teaches us that we can say all the right things, but if they aren't seasoned with love it doesn't matter. We can be saying true things, but if they aren't anchored in Grace than we aren't helping anyone. When it comes to sharing our faith, it's not about testing our individual metal, to see if we have what it takes to be in "the Lord's Army." It's about genuine love and concern for those among us living a life apart from Jesus and facing an eternal destiny apart from Him. Its not about us or our relative comfort or lack thereof, it's about others.

Question: *"What is motivating me to consider doing/saying/sharing this?"*

- Why are our motives important?

Verse to remember: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

Day 3

Devotional Thought:

I had never really thought about this before, but today I did. Why did Jesus hang out with people? Jesus' mission was to become our sin, suffer, die, conquer death, and sin through His resurrection so that we could be live in eternal relationship with God. So why didn't He just come to earth as a man and get it over with? Why 33 years of living among people, eating with people, dealing with people? Why did He bother to form relationships? Why didn't He just get the job done? Why did He choose to experience family, friends and enemies? Why would God choose to experience not just what it's like to be a human, but to experience humans? It wasn't critical to the mission that Jesus should hang out with twelve guys. It wasn't essential to our salvation that Jesus went to weddings, funerals and parties as we see him do in the Gospels. Fundamentally, all Jesus had to do was done on the cross. For some reason, He chose to interact with people in deeply significant ways. I think the truth is that Jesus accomplished a relational mission in a relational way. The mission involved restoring people's ability to connect with a holy God in a relational way. Jesus was the ultimate bridge builder between people and God. Our 6th value at Flatirons is "**Relational Evangelism.**" Our statement regarding that value is, "We will intentionally leverage influence in our world for the purpose of introducing people to the awesome love of Christ." Meaning, you don't have influence unless you have a relationship with people. So we don't drop pamphlets off on people's door steps, we don't cruise neighborhoods and knock on doors, not because we don't have truth to share, but because without relational credibility we may do more harm than good. People don't often feel valued by evangelism apart from a relationship, do they? I've never once felt like the people who knock on my door or hand me a pamphlet actually care about me. I feel like they care about getting another notch in their spiritual belt or putting me on some "sales" report, but they don't actually care about me. I actually believe that Jesus cares about us, beyond just sacrificing his life for us, but to the point where He was willing to get right in the middle of people's lives, interact with them in the messiness of their own condition, not because He had to, but because He wanted to. That's incredible.

Question: *"Who am I in relationship with that doesn't know and follow Jesus?"*

- How can I leverage my influence in their life for the purpose of introducing them to the awesome love of Jesus?"

Verse to Remember: Philippians 2:6-8 **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

Day 4

Devotional Thought:

Do you get those automated phone calls? I get them constantly, even sometimes on my cell phone. You always know it's them because it's some unrecognizable number on caller ID and unless you want to listen to the whole thing on your answering machine, it's just easier to pick up and hang up. I got one of these calls the other night. I didn't look at the caller ID, so I didn't realize what it was until that awkward pause after I said hello, which tells you the machine on the other end is about to introduce itself. Just as I was about to hang up I heard the phrase, "Hello, we would like to tell you about a church in your area." I quickly put the phone back to my ear and listened to the whole message. I had never received one of these calls from a church before and it intrigued me. I listened to the message twice and then hung up with a heavy heart. I was actually really sad after listening to this automated voice describe a local part of the body of Christ. I was saddened that a church felt compelled to employ a method that annoys most people. Most people don't associate good feelings with receiving these types of phone calls. My fear is that the calling campaign would actually be detrimental to the purpose it was utilized for. More than anything else, I was saddened at how impersonal this invitation was. It wasn't even a live person at the other end of the line; it was a recording of a live person. In a world that is becoming increasingly impersonal, the church must remain relational. While there are many technologies and methods at our disposal for reaching, communicating with, and inviting people, we have to remember who we follow. We follow Jesus, who valued human interaction. There is no substitute for real, raw and authentic relationships. Jesus could have written His message on the sky with fire, but He chose to write it on the hearts of people. Jesus could have displayed His glory for all to see, with lightning and thunder, but he chose instead to reveal it through the way he served his own students. Jesus really invested in people's lives. He addressed their fears, calmed their worried souls, healed their sicknesses, and brought hope to their hearts by His touch and through His words. If we, who call ourselves followers of Jesus, followed this example, churches wouldn't need signs, advertisement, or marketing plans. Jesus' idea for how to grow the church was simple, "Go." Not just the pastors and church staff, but all of us are commanded to simply go. You and I must go to those near and far and build relationships, because that's what Jesus did.

Question- "What keeps me from building relationships with the people around me?"

Verse to Remember: Matthew 28:18-20 "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Day 5

Devotional Thought:

People don't appreciate being projects. One of the problems I have with a lot of teaching on evangelism is the way "the lost" become objectified. Church people, often unintentionally, end up talking about "lost" people like they are a thing instead of people. When churches challenge people to "go" out into the world and tell people about Jesus they often fail to root this action in love. Christians actually end up adopting the language of war in regards to how they "bring people to Christ." Phrases like, "taking your school for Jesus" or "capturing your community for Christ" sound a little, well...hostile. Don't be misled, there is certainly a war going on, but Paul reminds us that our battle is not against flesh and blood, meaning other people. Our battle is against the spiritual forces of evil that show up in our world. Again, Jesus brings great clarity and focus to how we are supposed to bring His love to people who haven't embraced it. Jesus loved people, served people, and honored people whether they followed Him or not. When a rich young ruler approached Jesus looking for answers, the Bible tells us that Jesus looked at him and loved him. That's amazing because the rich young ruler didn't return the love, he walked away from Jesus. Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus washed Judas' feet? Jesus knew full well that Judas had betrayed Him and was going to turn Him over and yet, He still washed Judas' feet with his own hands. He also washed Peter's feet, even though he was going to deny him in a few hours. I think Jesus loved people like this because they were people! All created in His image, all fearfully and wonderfully made. The challenge is for you and me to love like that. Not to adopt people as projects, but to embrace them with love because Jesus loves them. If our love is genuine, then it will obviously compel us to share the hope of the world with them, but love comes first. Here's the really crazy part, love remains. Love remains even if they never choose to follow Jesus. Can we love people simply because we are called to love and serve friend and enemy alike? Can we love people whether they choose to follow Jesus or not? Ultimately, we can't save anyone anyway. All we can do is point to the one who can. The rest is between God and them.

Question- "Do I love and care for this person regardless of who or what they ultimately choose to follow?"

Verse to Remember: John 17:25-26 (Jesus' prayer for us) "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."