



Unit 1: You on Mission

Sermon Series Title: The Heart of a Disciple-Maker

Sermon 3: Communication of a Disciple-Maker

Bible Passage: Acts 20:18-21, 27-28

Background/Context

Paul journeyed to Troas, where a young man named Eutychus fell asleep in the middle of Paul's sermons and fell out of a third-story window to his death. Paul stopped preaching and brought the young man back to life and then went back to preaching. After Paul's experience in Ephesus, he traveled to Macedonia, to Philippi, back to Troas, and to Miletus. Paul called for the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him in Miletus. It is in this place where the Apostle greeted them with loving affection. Why? Paul had spent about three and a half years in Ephesus. He trained and taught these men. Paul recounted his approach to ministry, his mindset in ministry, and his vigor in ministry (18-21). He told them that this would be the last time they would see his face. Tears filled their eyes and sorrow entered into their hearts as he explained that he must go to Jerusalem and that the Spirit had warned him of prison and hardships in his future (22-27).

During this encounter with the Ephesian elders, Paul also gave his approach for communicating the gospel, the places to communicate the gospel, and the essential message found in communicating the gospel.

A. Strategy of the Message (Acts 20:18-20a)

When Paul said, "I did not avoid proclaiming to you anything that was profitable, or from teaching you publicly and from house to house" (v. 20), he revealed his strategy for communicating the message. First, he modeled the message visually (vv. 18-19). Paul told them that he showed them the gospel. In addition to personally living by the message, Paul also instructed Timothy, "Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

Obviously, Paul also taught them verbally. He expressed his charge and said, "Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts" (1Thess. 2:4). Paul did mix his walk with his talk. He realized that he needed to live what he preached. This strategy made him an effective communicator. Like a father interacts with his children, Paul could exhort, comfort, and charge those to whom he preached because he modeled the message.

Application Point: The Christian community has taken a huge hit from those outside the faith because we often fail to practice what we preach. Many believer's actions and activities hinder

the message of the cross. What biblical principles should believers rely on to guide their actions and decision making?

B. Site of the Message (Acts 20:20b)

What is the site or place of communicating God's message of mercy and grace for Christians? Paul provided every saint with a template to follow. First, we learn that every believer must teach the word in public. While Paul and his companions were at Salamis, Iconium, and Ephesus, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues (Acts 13:5, 14:1; 18:4; 19:8). This was Paul's and his fellow workers' normal activity. Jesus also spoke to the multitude from a boat off the shore, from a hilltop, and in the synagogue. These individuals shared the gospel in the public square.

Second, we learn that every follower of Christ must also communicate the message in private. Paul said that he shared the message "from house to house." This could mean house churches or it can be taken as a private interaction. Paul and Silas had a private conversation with the Philippian jailer. Peter shared the message of grace in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:25). Jesus told Zacchaeus, "today it is necessary for me to stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). These servants of God shared the Word of God with individuals in private. Meeting individuals in the comfort of homes and in private spaces should be a part of every believer's practice.

Application Point: As believers, we must remember that we are on mission when we are on the job, in the grocery store, at the mall, and at places of leisure. What are some opportunities you've missed in sharing the gospel with individuals in public and in private settings? Going forward, what will you do to prepare to share God's message in public and in private?

C. Substance of the Message (Acts 20:21,27-28)

Paul explained the substance of God's message. He testified to all people, both Jew and Greek, about repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. Sinful men and women have used a variety of approaches to respond to a Holy God, but only one is proper. Humanity must respond with contrition (repentance) and confidence (faith). These two responses occupy one side each of the same coin. First, men and women must understand that they have offended the Holy God, fall short of His standards, and must repent. God's way is the correct way. Knowing this should propel them to detest or hate sin and to love God's way. Repentance displays a heartfelt disdain for sin. Faith displays a heartfelt love for God and His way.

Hosea, the prophet, exhorted the Israelites to "return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: 'Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good...'" (Hosea 14:1–2). Hosea teaches that humanity must turn away from sin and turn to God in faith. We must believe that God is able to fix our sin problem. Paul emphasized that he had not moved away from declaring this message, and he called upon the elders to "shepherd the church of God" with the same.

Application Point: What is the substance of the faith message and how does it motivate believers to respond? How can we know if our faith is real? By faith, believers can bear witness to the truth of God's Word.