

## “When You Have Good News”

---

### Introduction

I will say: “**When you have Good News,**” and you respond, “**YOU SHARE IT!**” Ready? “When you have Good News... You share it!” “When you have good news... You share it!” When you have Good News”... You share it!

*I heard some very good news when I was about 12-years old, living in Arlington Heights, Illinois. I believe it was the summer 1979 and I heard it from my younger brother’s friend, Alan Degener, who was peddling his bike down Evanston Street just as fast as his 8-year old legs could make his bike go. He was shouting something – a wild excited look in his eye. Then I heard it – could it be true? “Free Ice Cream!!!”*

At first I thought that perhaps they were sharing ice cream with the neighbor kids out of their own freezer – Generous to be sure – but that is not what he meant at all.

The grocery store that was close to our neighborhood was an IGA. It was where everyone in our neighborhood shopped and it was close enough that we could ride our bike there. Alan clarified what was going on, “The IGA is giving away free ice-cream – grab your bikes!”

Talk about good news! It sounded too good to be true? Would we be disappointed? We hopped on our bikes and went to go find out for ourselves.

*When you have good news... You share it!* Today we look at sharing our faith and in doing so we want to ask and answer four question 1) What is the “Good News?” 2) With whom do we share it? 3) Why this so hard, sometimes? And 4) How can we at LCCC share the Good News?

## **What is the good news?**

Let's begin by asking the question, "What is the Good News?" Here we need a little Greek background. The Greek word for good news is εὐαγγέλιον which means "God's good news to humans." That is a message from God – a revelation from God – delivered to humans. God is the author of the Gospel. We, in this church are called "evangelicals" – what is that? An evangelical is a Good News Person – or Gospel People – those committed to sharing the Good News, authored by God, with others.

But what is the Gospel? One place we can find a definition is in a good Bible Encyclopedia. One good was says that: *"Jesus Himself belongs to His gospel. He is the heart and core of it... "It is the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through Christ. It means remission of sins and reconciliation with God. (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).*

Closer at hand - the gospel has been helpfully summarized in our time, by Campus Crusade in their Four Spiritual Laws, by Child Evangelism Fellowship in their wordless book, in E3's ministry EvangeCube, through the American Tract Society's – Faith Bear, or the Navigator's bridge illustration.

These methods reflect the gospel as it is found in Scripture that: (1) all of humanity has sinned and fallen short of God's standards – (2) And because we have done wrong – we must face the penalty for that – death – physically and spiritually. (3) But, praise be to God that Jesus took the punishment of our sin upon himself – as our substitute on the Cross. Because he never sinned, he did not have to die, but he did so voluntarily to pay our punishment upon Himself. (4) Though Jesus died to the sins of the world – the bible teaches that not everyone will go to

heaven. Only those who put their faith in Jesus Christ receive forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

To put it simply – the Gospel is that which *saves* a woman or man. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” Romans 1:16.

Dr. Toussaint told our seminary class, “My favorite word for the gospel is ‘come’” Because the gospel is the invitation of Christ to enter into a personal relationship with Him and to enjoy a new and abundant life – now and forevermore.

Now... For us as a church to share the gospel – we must know what the gospel is. That makes sense. Evangelist Larry Moyer says that 95% of Christians have never shared their faith with another person – Why? There are two main reasons – the first is that people don’t know how. Daniel Southern, the president of the American Tract Society states that 50% of Christians are not able to articulate the gospel in such a way that is clear and gives an invitation for people to come and receive it.

My vision for us as a church is that if you are around us for any length of time – that you will be equipped to articulate the gospel – That we will provide training so that each person will know what the Gospel is and how to share it.

When I was in college, a good friend of mine had a Bible study – a mix of Christians and non-Christians, and I had a Bible study as well. We were all in the same residence hall. One young man in my friend’s study– Ben, was not a Christian and went to my friend and asked him what he needed to do to become a Christian. My friend did not feel prepared to share the gospel and said, “I will get back with you on that – we will talk about that later.” Ben happened into my room later that day and knowing I also led a Bible study asked me the same question.” Not

knowing he had talked to my friend - I shared the gospel with him using a method I had just learned called “the bridge” and I had the blessing of praying with Ben as he placed his faith in Jesus Christ. Later when I talked with my friend he vowed never to be caught unprepared again to share the gospel.

*We must know the gospel before we can share the gospel.* I don't want to happen to you what happened to my friend – that you might miss out on a blessing because you are not prepared to share.

### **With whom do we Share it?**

*The second question I would like to address is “With whom do we share the gospel? And here we have a very interesting and consistent message in Scripture. “Share the gospel to those who are geographically close by and to those who are geographically far away.”*

- Acts 1:8 “...be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
- Acts 2:38-39 Peter's sermon, “Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all you who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”
- Acts 23:22 Jesus said to Paul “...as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

Jesus is concerned that the gospel be preached both to those nearby and to those far away. There is a tragic movement in some evangelical churches to do-away with world missions, and only focus on local evangelism. Other churches have great world mission's programs, but lack

greatly in sharing the gospel at home. Having a local evangelism focus and have a world mission program are not “either / or” but “both / and.” Both are vital to being a gospel-sharing church. I am very excited to begin our church with two missionaries – in Sweden and Germany. I am also excited for what we will do locally to reach out to our community.

### **Why is sharing so hard?**

We must acknowledge at this point that sometimes the gospel sharing can be hard. Why is that? The fact of the matter is that when we share the gospel we can't control the response. Sometimes the gospel is received and embraced, and other times it is rejected and opposed. At Georgetown University, a private Roman Catholic institution, this past Fall, several private ministry groups, including InterVarsity were ejected from campus. Why? According to the InterVarsity staff person, Kevin Offner, as reported in the Washington Post: “The university has become more controlling and concerned about evangelizing. The groups were required to sign statements saying they would not proselytize.”

Such opposition in response to sharing our faith is not new - Consider the first century church.

- As Paul taught at Thessalonica “some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas...but the Jews becoming Jealous and taking along some wicked men formed a mob and set the city in an uproar.” Acts 17:4-5
- Paul on Mars Hill “now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this.’” Acts 17:32
- Paul to Corinthians, “But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called...the power of God.” 1 Cor 1:23

We have already seen that one reason why 95% of Christians do not share their faith is because they do not know how to articulate it. But there is another reason – the second reason people do not share their faith is because they are afraid. This is not a safe area for Christians and so we need courage and faith, lest we join the many, many Bible churches who fail in the area of sharing.

### **How do we share our faith?**

This transitions us to our final point, which is how do we plan to share our faith – the gospel at LCCC?

1) To pray. The first thing we must do is to pray. I am passing out a sheet of paper that I want both you and I to keep in our Bibles, or journals – A top 10 list for prayer. People we are regularly and intentionally praying for. This is an application for me as well as for you. God saves people and we do not – we only share the Good News!

Back at the U of A, I was praying for a young man from New York names Jason. He wanted nothing to do with Christianity. He was a partying and enjoying his freshman year. He knew I was a Christian and we talked about many other things. One night, I believe in answer to my prayers, he came home late at night – I was still up and he asked me, “Craig, what do I need to do to become a Christian?” What an answer to prayer! There in the study room I outlined the gospel on the white board. Do you want to have more opportunity to share your faith? Pray and God will work.

2) Practice. An image I often think of in regard to sharing the gospel is that it is like changing the tire on your car. You could do it, if pressed, you think. I have an idea anyway of a

jack and a tire – I think I know where they are – but I'd really rather not and when the opportunity comes, I'd rather call the professionals to do the work for me. But, if you had to change a tire every day – you would become more comfortable with it.

- 1) Corporate Opportunities – Community outreaches – at Movie theatre?
- 2) LCCC as a place where you can bring your friends – Book in bag.
- 3) I am giving you this week a book for you to read – to equip you – encourage you.

**Conclusion:**

Soon – We were on our way, peddling as fast as our legs could carry us – to the IGA. Was the good news really good news? And it was as Alan had preached to us – the freezer was broken – the man with the IGA apron was passing out brown paper bags – We filled them up and put them in our baskets, balanced them on our seats and held them in our arms as we rode our treasures back home. The summer of 1979 was a summer of push-ups, strawberry shortcake ice cream bars and chocolate ice cream bars. The Good News delivered on its promise – So it is with God's Word – The Gospel delivers – it is the power of God for salvation.

**When you have good news... YOU SHARE IT!**