

## **"Language of Love"**

Acts 2:1-8

*Sermon Series "Living Outside the Box"*

*Week 2- Living Outside Barriers*

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Some of you know that I speak more than one language. At the age of one, my parents immigrated to Asuncion, Paraguay and I learned Spanish. Then we crossed the border to Sao Paolo, Brazil and I learned Portuguese. And then, my parents told us in Korean that we would finally move to Philadelphia in the land of opportunity, the United States of America. I came to this country in 1985 and had to learn English. But it was in 1997 that I learned how to speak in tongues. After my first year as a working adult in Seoul, Korea, I faithfully attended a prayer meeting in a non-denominational church. I never even met the pastor of this mega church with its 20,000 plus members. But I heard of their vision statement to become an Acts 29 church. Actually, I didn't even hear this particular pastor preach. There were so many ministries, the church had 6 security officers who worked around the clock in the three buildings of the church.

If you have a school aged child or grandchild you may have heard of Jamie Oliver's food revolution. The premise of the show is to save America's health by changing the way Americans eat. The reason for the great support that this movement has received is simple. There is indisputable proof that obesity is the cause for chronic illness. Most people know that eating fresh foods rather than processed foods will create healthier bodies. So it is easy to support a cause whose basic method guarantees success.

What if God told you that there is a guaranteed yes to your prayer, would you then join the prayer revolution? The premise of the prayer revolution is to save America from spiritual starvation by praying the promises God has made. But first, we, Christians, have to acknowledge that there is a spiritual epidemic and that we are in desperate need for a prayer revolution.

The survey from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life "finds that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith today is more than double the number who say they were not affiliated with any particular religion as children. Among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion." <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>

Some of you might not be disturbed with these statistics, thinking that these numbers don't really matter. Young people are not religious and they don't want the constraints of religious rules. If you are excusing these numbers through developmental psychology, you need to pay attention to these next findings:

According to research from the Barna Group, it is a myth to think that everyone has an equal chance of becoming a Christ follower. The reality is that the faith trajectory of the vast majority of Americans is mapped out before they become adults, often before

they even reach adolescence. In fact, for every one hundred people who are not born again by the time they reach age eighteen, only six of those individuals will commit their lives to Christ for the first time as an adult. (UnChristian, David Kinnaman)

Are we going to give people a 6% chance to become followers of Christ? In the medical field, if you receive a 6% chance for survival, you are receiving a death sentence. We need a prayer revolution. We need to get on our knees and start praying for our children, not just for their protection but for their salvation. Because, do you know what God says to all of these statistics, to all of our realities: <sup>20</sup>For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And here is the promise that God made to us: "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Are you praying this promise on your children's friends? Are you praying this promise on your children? And for those of you who do not have children, may I ask, are you praying this prayer for Woodside's children, for the 200 children registered in VBS--for the many children who will not go to church other than this next week of VBS camp?

As someone who works with children and youth, I need each one of you to get a little uncomfortable today... you need to realize that children and youth ministries are the ministry of the Kingdom of God. When we do children and youth ministries we are not just providing an extra curriculum activity so that some may learn to sing, we are not just providing a safe haven so that they can overcome the temptations of drugs and alcohol; we are not just providing fun, and distractions. I find myself always asking the students, "was it fun?" as if our ministry's main purpose was to entertain the children. Next year, our theme is going to be "JOY". For you see, we need to realize that there is a spiritual epidemic and that we need to teach, guide and most importantly pray for our children. God never promised us fun, but he did promise us his Holy Spirit who gives us joy. We need a prayer revolution because without tapping into our Father's heart all of our church programs, are just that they are programs, they lose the focus of bringing glory to God and developing people who follow Jesus Christ. So I am going to challenge you today to pray for our children and youth. I'm going to ask you to really think about partnering with God in these ministries through prayer. I'm going to ask you specifically to pray for Sunday School teachers and youth leaders. I don't know if you can hear the excitement in my voice, but every summer there is one thing that causes anxiety in my life: recruiting for Sunday school teachers. At the end of every school year, there are many positions to be filled and in my head I'm thinking I know Steve is good but I can't ask my husband to cover 10 classes for me! But as I was preparing for this sermon God changed my strategy for recruiting. I'm not going to ask you to teach, I'm just going to pray.

Listen to what Jesus tells his disciples as  
<sup>5</sup>Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:35-38)

This is a rare occasion when Jesus offers a direct command on what to pray for, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." But this is a strange request! If Jesus sensed the need for more workers, why not simply recruit more? Or ask the Lord of the harvest himself?

And it is here that we, once again, discover the vulnerability of God, that Jesus, even in his earthly ministry, turned to us, mere humans to partner with him. Jesus himself had appealed to the Lord of the harvest in an all-night ordeal that resulted in the 12 disciples standing before him. Now he called on those twelve to pray for more workers because he knew the Father would listen to their prayers. He was welcoming them as partners of the kingdom. And today, God is calling you to pray, God is calling you to become partners of the kingdom.

Friends, in prayer we partner with God when we claim God's promises for us and our children. As a church, we gather for the prayer of the people and we pray with passion for healing, with joy as we celebrate a birthday, with petition as we pray for jobs, direction and comfort. But do we pray for God's Kingdom, also? Actually, this is the one prayer that we should be praying all the time.

In the beginning of June the staff took half a day retreat for reflection on our ministries. Doug asked us about our personal joys and concerns and at the end of our sharing we noticed that we found joy knowing that our loved ones were followers of Christ and the greatest concern when they were not. I share this so you know that even for people whose primary jobs are working at a church, we have loved ones who are not followers of Christ, but we are going to pray for them, we are going to have a prayer revolution.

Scripture tells us that the answer we will receive when we pray for salvation in Jesus Christ is always a "Yes". For it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. And if you don't know how to start praying for your loved ones who are not followers of Christ, just follow what scripture says, simply pray "set your seal of ownership on \_\_\_\_\_". I pray like this because when I pray for salvation I am engaged in spiritual battle.

In Star Wars and Star Trek we encounter the forces. These forces are clearly defined as the forces of good and evil. In the Bible, Satan is not depicted with a fork on one hand and fire coming out of his nostrils. But there is a clear understanding that Satan is scheming against God, and Jesus never ignored Satan or got confused by the devil. Jesus confronted Satan through prayer. I confess I get a little confused by Satan but from my reading of scripture and from my personal experience I know that Satan is the father of all lies and his primary goal is to steal God's glory. Satan does not want us to pray and speak the Amen! for the glory of God. Satan likes to toy with our hearts, to act as if he owns it. So we must pray. Because when we pray we always say Amen. Because when we pray we declare to God, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory now and forevermore, Amen. We pray because we are not going to let Satan steal God's glory.

I pray for little things like please give me patience when my daughter takes the toilet paper and runs across the house. I don't want my response to this unruly act to rob God of His glory. So I pray. I pray for the big things like the oil spill in the gulf that is affecting our nation, the livelihood of our neighbors in Louisiana, the ocean waters of God's creation... I pray because I do not want Satan to rob God of His glory, and because in Christ, God promises us victory over Satan. Satan is not my scapegoat, and I'm not going to talk about politics, but one thing I know when there is something bad Satan takes full advantage and he will scheme to make it even worse, and I'm not going to ignore his schemes and I'm not going to let him take my attention away from prayer. I am going to turn to God in all circumstances, the only One who makes even bad things work out for good for those who love Him.

Woodside you've heard all about prayer, but are you ready for a prayer revolution? You've heard that there is no right or wrong way to pray, that there are no requests that are too big or too small to offer to God. And I'm going to end by reminding you one more time: simply pray from your heart. Pray from your heart because Jesus put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. The only way that the prayer revolution will fail is if you don't pray, because our partner in prayer is God, and when we pray the numerous promises that He has given us, His answer to them is always yes. Jesus himself is in constant prayer, interceding for us. And so through Him, let us say Amen to the glory of God!