

LIGHTBEARERS:
BEARING WITNESS TO THE GOSPEL

Jesus once said, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.*" He wasn't joking, because elsewhere he told his followers, "*You are the light of the world.*" This is no small claim. It's also no small charge. In this series, we trace not only this theme throughout God's Story, but also this commission - to bear witness to the good news of Jesus.

Series Scripture Passages:

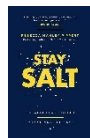
October 5	Genesis 1:27-28
October 12	Exodus 19:1-6
October 19	Psalms 40
October 26	Isaiah 43:1-3
November 2	John 3:22-36; 10:40-42
November 9	Acts 4:13-22
November 16	Acts 8:26-40
November 23	Colossians 4:2-6
November 30	5 th Sunday (no regular gathering)
December 7	1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
December 14	TBD
December 21	1 Timothy 2:1-8

Special Gathering Times:

December 24	Christmas Eve Gatherings 12:30pm Jackson 2 & 4pm West Bend
December 28	10am Combined Gathering West Bend

Much of this resource has been directly taken from the book, Stay Salt by Rebecca Manley Pippert.

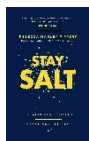
[Stay Salt] by [Rebecca Manley Pippert], copyright [2020] by The Good Book Company, used by kind permission’.



Other Resources include:

Saturate, Verge Network, Desiring God and missionalmadesimple.com

Links to the full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources



Acknowledging the Reality of Our Weaknesses

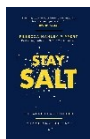
Most of us feel inadequate, lacking in knowledge, experience and confidence to share our faith. Rebecca Pippert says, “What we need, more than anything else, is God-confidence. Having confidence in the true God is what enables us to see that our weakness does not limit the powerful living God. He is delighted to use us, as we take small steps of obedience.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5, “I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”

We need to learn again to share our faith in a confident, compassionate, compelling way in this new, post-Christian world.... even if people can’t quite articulate what they feel they are missing, the longing and wistfulness are there. But they will not know where to look unless Christians both live and tell the good news of what God has done for all in Christ.

Examples from the Bible:

Abraham was a moon worshipper from Ur – hardly a great qualification for becoming the father of Israel. David was a shepherd boy who was so undervalued that it didn’t even occur to his father to present him to the prophet Samuel – yet he became the greatest king that Israel ever had. The Samaritan woman in John 4 had a checkered past and present, yet she became the first Christian convert and (almost immediately) the first evangelist in her community.



Step Aside Becky

God has been glorified in my weakness. My faith has grown over the years as I have learned to joyfully confess to God my weakness and my total dependence upon him. I have seen again and again that God knows how to reach my skeptic friends, even when I do not.

When Dick and I were based in the UK so that we could minister throughout Europe... I made a quick appointment for a manicure the day before we were to fly home to Michigan for the summer.

Walking to the salon, I began thinking about the young manicurist whom I had known during those two years. Heather was a lovely, delightful young woman, but not remotely interested in faith. Her interests were primarily in beauty and fashion. She had begun opening up to me about her life, yet whenever I brought up the topic of faith, she always changed the subject. So on my way there that day I prayed, "Lord, I have tried everything to rouse Heather's curiosity in the gospel. But she just isn't interested. If there is a way to reach her, then you, Lord, will have to do it, because I cannot."

Inside the salon there was a shelf against the wall with a tall pile of magazines stacked one on top of the other. Entering, I started to reach for the magazine on top, when I suddenly felt the strong urge to take the magazine in the middle. It was almost as if there was a big arrow pointing to it! Then I went to Heather's table for my manicure.

As she began working on one hand, I started turning pages with my free hand, until I suddenly stopped and stared at one page. I continued turning the pages, but I kept turning back to look at that one page. Heather finally asked, "Why on earth do you keep looking back at that page? What's on it?"

“It's a picture of a very elegant, beautiful woman wearing a gorgeous coat and a hat, but I can't see much of her face,” I said. “It's so weird though, because I feel as if I know her... but that's impossible.”

Then it suddenly hit me. “Oh my goodness!” I said to Heather: “I do know who she is! It is Jenny Guinness! This picture is a cover from Vogue magazine that was taken years ago when she was a well-known fashion model. Later she married my very close friend, Os Guinness.”

Heather said, “You know a fashion model who was on the cover of Vogue?” As I nodded, she turned to everyone in the salon and said, “Guess what? Becky knows a fashion model whose picture has been on some of the covers of Vogue!”

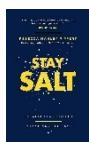
I started to tell Heather of how, during Jenny's career as a fashion model, she began feeling that her life was empty, and how it ultimately led her on a spiritual search. Heather's eyes widened: “Becky, do you know Jenny's story? Because I would love to hear it!”

In that instant I realized what God had done. Fashion and beauty were Heather's “mother ship.” To hear anything about the life of a fashion model fascinated her. So I told her about Jenny's search for meaning, what drew her to Christ, and why the gospel had made so much sense to her.

Heather listened in rapt attention. Then she asked me if I had any books on the Christian faith that she could read. Before we left for the airport, I dropped off some books that were written for seekers.

What does this story tell us? The Lord of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, passionately longs for his creation to know him – and that includes a 21-year-old nail technician whose primary interest is fashion. I had walked into the shop saying to the Lord, “I can't reach her, so you must.” It was almost as if the Lord was saying, “Step aside Becky; I will show you how it's done!”

In the autumn, I discovered that Heather had unexpectedly moved to another country. God had known what I had not – that that appointment had been the last time I would see her. I had asked God to provide an opportunity to share the gospel, and he did! So I entrusted Heather to God's loving care, asking him to bring another Christian into her life who, in God's wonderful timing and grace, may one day lead her to Christ. ***Here is the truth we must learn by heart: God uses the weak to reveal his glory!***



Witness is not a verb; it is a noun. The issue isn't whether we desire to be Jesus' witnesses but whether we'll be His faithful witnesses. We are called to "live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). The difficulty today is that often the unseen is no more real for Christians than it is for skeptics.

Too often we behave, without realizing it, as functional atheists.

We are being transformed into Christ's image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

~ 2 Corinthians 3:18

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses. ~ Acts 1:8

"Skeptics can tell if we are merely reciting a set of beliefs or if we have fallen in love with the One we are proclaiming."

~ Rebecca Pippert

What do we do to develop a deeper awareness of spiritual realities?

We must take seriously the apostle Paul's exhortation to "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:18). How do we fix our eyes on the unseen? By learning how to walk in the power of the Spirit, which will reshape our lives and deeply impact our evangelism."

- Abide in Christ (John 15:4-5)
- Pray
- Read the Word of God
- Ask God, "Where are you already at work in my world? Who are the people in my life that you are seeking? Open my eyes to see!"

How ready are you to live on mission?

Use the Saturate *Missional Self-Reflection Tool* to answer the following questions:

Do you believe that God is a missional God?

Do you have eyes to see the mission field that God has put in your life?

Do you have a life available?

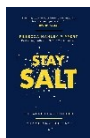
Do you have hands and feet that are ready to serve?

Are you equipped and ready for your lips to speak?

Full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources

Who are you talking to Jesus about?

Geni Begu, a former REACH Global Partner says, “*We have to talk to Jesus about them before we talk to them about Jesus.*”



We must ask God to show us what might cause our skeptic friends to start to respond in wonder.... It's also why asking good questions is so important, because they can gently help our friends to question their own skepticism, which may lead them to reconsider their own beliefs and become curious about what we believe.

I came to know an Eastern European woman who was raised in a communist country by parents who were brilliant academics and fervent atheists. She too was an atheist and a gifted violinist. We began having spiritual conversation, but they never seemed to go anywhere – until the day I asked her this question: “I’m curious. Is there anything that has ever caused you to doubt your atheism?”

She thought for a moment and then answered, “Just one thing: when I play glorious, beautiful music like a Bach composition. Sometimes, as I play, I become so caught up that it almost feels like I am worshiping. I am transported to some other place, and I think to myself, “I am not just a physical being with biological drives. There must be more to life than what I can see.’ But I know that sounds crazy.”

“Actually,” I replied, “I think your response is very revealing. As a musician, you probably know that Joann Sebastian Bach was a deeply committed Christian. It’s why he wrote *Soli Deo Gloria* on every piece of music he wrote: *To the glory of God alone*. Bach believed that writing and performing his music was an act of worship to God. So what you need to figure out is why your head believes one thing but your heart is saying something completely different. They both can’t be right, so which of your responses is closer to what is real and true?

“Actually, I wish there was a God,” she said. “But even if God exists, I am certain God is certainly not interested in me or the greatest passion of my life – my music.”

I said, “Did you know there are biblical descriptions of heaven that describe a place where there is glorious music and singing and worship? Which suggests that music existed before the earth was created. I believe your love for music comes from the One who created music – God himself!”

Several months later I invited her, along with other skeptic friends, to a Bible study looking at Jesus, and she came. What was the Bible story that moved her to tears? The story of the shepherds in Luke 2, who are watching their flocks at night when suddenly the heavens open up, an angel speaks, and there is glorious angelic praise!

Though it’s not entirely clear whether the angels sang or spoke their praise that first Christmas night, my friend was gripped. She asked where in the Bible it described music and singing in heaven. Because of our previous conversation, I had looked up other verses, just in case she asked! So I read aloud how God describes what happened when he created the world: “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” (Job 38 v7-8). I read Zephaniah 3 v17, explaining that this was a picture of when Christ returns to earth at the end of history and after the final judgment, when all believers are reunited with Christ; “He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, and he will rejoice over you with singing.”

Tears sprung to her eyes again, and she said, “God himself sings? It’s almost too beautiful to bear!” Here is what had caused her to take Jesus’ claims seriously: the reality that music is created and singing is something God does. In our evangelism we need to answer the rational questions of the mind, but we also need to show how the gospel answers our hearts as well. The gospel addresses the whole person, and so must we. It was having a baby that caused my atheist

friend to wonder if there was more to life. It was playing Bach that caused my violinist friend to experience awe and to question if God might exist. Never forget that these experiences of wonder are there to point us another reality – to a deeper reality: to the One we have been searching for, perhaps unaware, all along.

That is why we need to ask our non-Christian friends if they have ever had an experience so profound that it caused them, even momentarily, to wonder if God exists?

After the last Bible study my violinist friend said, “Becky, when I discovered you were a Christian, I was determined that we’d never be friends. I loathed religion and felt believers were intellectual morons. I used every opportunity to say mocking things about Christians in your presence. What I couldn’t understand was why you didn’t avoid me. In fact, you actually seemed to like me.”

She went on, “As our relationship grew, I saw that your faith wasn’t mindless. You took my questions seriously, but you also asked questions that challenged my own beliefs and really made me think. Yet I wouldn’t have attended the Bible study if we hadn’t first established a friendship.”

Then she added, “No one is more surprised than I am to find myself so drawn to Jesus. The truth is, I’m not the same woman I was when we first met. Many of my prejudices about Christians have subsided, and I am realizing that there are intelligent answers to some of my objections to faith. I still have doubts, and I’m not ready to become a Christian – but I definitely want to keep exploring Christianity. Could we do another Bible study?”

When she saw that the biblical story of a Creator God explained her powerful response to the beauty of music, she became increasingly open and started to take Jesus seriously. *Our task is to make people more aware of their human longings and desires, and what their passions point to.*

Regular life rhythms can become ways of helping others know Jesus. The resource, “*Gospel Rhythms for Everyday Life*” covers the following ways we can be intentional:

Eat: Get to know someone. Ask good questions.

Bless: Actions, our service or words, a gift – all can point to the blessing of Christ.

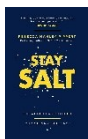
Listen: Intently paying attention is a great act of love and care. As you listen, also be listening to God and what He might want you to encourage them with.

Celebrate: Bringing the joy of Christ into a celebration through your words and actions is powerful!

Story: Listening to someone’s story gives them your presence and attention and shows that you care. How might God’s story bless and encourage them?

ReCreate: Resting and being refreshed is part of the rhythm God wants for our lives. Invite others into that space with you.

Full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources



How do we talk about sin? Let's start in the place where everyone agrees: something has gone wrong in this world and must be made right.

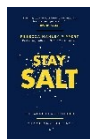
The story of the 'fall' enables us to be honestly realistic and tremendously hopeful at the same time.

Three key things we need to do in order to address the difficult topic of sin without alienating people:

- We need to express love and compassion, and avoid being self-righteous or judgmental. *"Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get food."* ~ D.T. Niles, a Sri Lankan pastor and evangelist
- We need to thank people for their courage in sharing their stories with us, while encouraging them to take a deeper look. We need to help them identify their longings and aspirations that lie behind their struggles.
- When people are spiritually open, we have the opportunity to explain why sin is the deepest problem that we all share. They are not alone. But we must talk honestly and clearly about sin – in language that they can understand.

"For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and put himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives that belong to God alone; God accepts penalties that belong to man alone."

(John Stott, The Cross of Christ, page 160)



Why the Bad News of Sin is Good News for People

The Bible describes sin as both unbelief and idolatry.... The issue of idolatry can be deeply relevant to unbelievers.

While we were living in the UK, I often went to the same London hair salon, and my hairdresser's name was Theo. As trust grew between us, Theo told me he was gay. He shared his life with me, and I shared my life and faith with him. While he respected my faith, he wasn't sure if God existed.

One day I arrived at the salon, and when I greeted Theo I realized that he was very low. As I sat in the chair, I put my hand on his arm and said, "Theo, are you going to tell me what's wrong?" He looked at me and said, "Becky, you are the only customer all day who's even noticed that I'm depressed." He continued, "You know I've had a partner for several years. He is someone I have cherished and adored. He has deep problems, but I felt our love could fix anything. To be very honest, I worshiped him. But last week he moved out. I am absolutely devastated, and I don't know where to turn. But you are a Christian, so are you going to tell me that our relationship was doomed because I'm homosexual?"

I took a deep breath, and said, "Oh Theo, I am so grieved to see you in this much pain. Actually, I think the issue you are struggling with is deeper than sexual identity. In fact, I have a straight friend, Anna, who just told me the exact same thing: she met the love of her life and was certain that their love would heal them both. But he recently left her for another woman, and she's now clinically depressed. Yet what I find interesting is that you both told me that you worshiped your partners, which is very insightful."

"Why is that insightful?" he asked.

"Because God has given us worshiping natures; we've been created to love and worship God. But where we run into trouble is when we try to

worship something other than God – when we put something else in God’s place. That can be good things or bad things, but God-substitutes will always fail us because they aren’t big enough to ultimately build our lives upon.”

Theo said, “That is exactly what my partner told me! He said I was trying to make him my everything and expecting him to meet my every need. He even said, ‘I’m not God! It’s way beyond my pay grade, and frankly it’s exhausting.’”

I said, “Yes, it’s why God-substitutes never work – because we are asking them to give us what only God can give: identity, purpose, and being totally understood and perfectly loved. The Bible even has a word for relying on god-substitutes – idolatry.”

Theo looked at me in astonishment and said, “So you’re telling me that, according to the bible, my suffering is actually due to the fact that I’ve been worshiping the wrong thing?”

“Exactly! And Theo, you are not alone!” I said. “All of us, myself included, have used God-substitutes. All of us have turned from God and how he created us to be. It’s the primary reason for all the brokenness around us and in us. The Christian author C.S. Lewis put it this way: when you look at cars, they appear to be functioning independently, but they are not! Cars are made to run on petrol. If we put anything else in the tank, they cannot function properly.

“Theo, it’s exactly the same with us. We’ve been created for a relationship with God: to live with God at the center of our lives. But all of us have turned from God and have tried to run our lives as if we are in charge. We’ve all used God-substitutes to give our lives meaning and purpose. The reason the Christian message is called ‘good news’ is because God loves us and has been seeking us far longer than we realize. But we also need to own the bad news – that we have chosen something else in place of God.”

“What scares me is that what you’re saying makes so much sense,” Theo answered. “That to find the love I’ve been searching for all my life, I have to get my relationship with God sorted first. But I couldn’t come to God, Becky – not after all the things I’ve done.”

“Theo,” I replied, “the only reason any of us can come to God is because God loves us. Jesus came from heaven and died on the cross for our sin because everyone needs God’s forgiveness. There isn’t anything we can do to deserve such a gift except to thank Jesus for all he has done for us, tell him we are sorry for our sin, and invite Jesus to come into our lives as Lord.”

Theo said, “Becky, only the staff know this, but I’ve decided to go back to my home country to try to recover. This is my last week here. But I want to thank you for speaking plainly without making me feel judged. Thank you for saying that you’ve also tried God-substitutes. Thank you for telling me that God loves me and wants a relationship with me when I am feeling so worthless. You’ve already given me some books and a Bible, so I think it’s time I start reading them.”

When we said goodbye, it was poignant and heartfelt.

When people sense our compassion and love, and when they see that we ourselves identify as sinners and that we aren’t looking down on them in judgment, it enables them to “hear” us, because they don’t feel we are standing above them in judgment.

Theo and Anna were suffering deeply because they were both confused at the same point: that what makes us truly human and whole, and enables us to receive what our hearts have been searching for all along, is God.

Only God properly defines us. It is only through our relationship with God that we find our true identity and receive what we most need: forgiveness, reconciliation with God, identity, purpose, and the love that will never leave us.

“Missional work starts and ends with relationships. Conversations create the backbone of healthy relationships. However, we’ve found, many people struggle to have meaningful conversations and take the posture of a curious listener with the other person (and not ourselves) at the center.” ~ 2018 Saturate

From “10 Questions to Help You Listen to Others”

What was good about your week? Why? How did it make you feel?

What are you thankful for from this past week?

What has brought you the most excitement lately? Why?

What was difficult about your week? Why? What did it make you feel?

What are you learning these days?

What has made you feel worried or frustrated this week? Why? How did you deal with it?

What has made you feel sad this week? Why? How did you deal with it?

What was growing up like for you?

What advice would you give me? I’m struggling with...

From “10 Ways to Relationally Connect with Others”

Share a meal

Play a sport together

Plan a play date with your kids’ friends and their parents.

Exercise together

Spend time outdoors

Play a game together

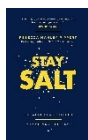
Have a group hang-out

Ask for help

Go out in your town or city

What other ideas do you have?

Full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources



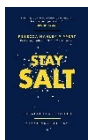
Just as sin separates us from God's loving presence, so Jesus was separated from that loving presence. That reality, far more than the nails and suffocation, is why the cross was so excruciating. To pay the price for human sin Jesus had to experience the utter anguish and abandonment of being forsaken by His Father and bearing His judgement for sin. That is what hell is – to be severed from the loving presence of God – and hell is what Jesus' agony was about, because through all eternity the Son of God had never known a moment apart from the love of His Father – and yet that is precisely what He knew on the cross. All we can ask is "What kind of God willingly sacrifices to much so that he can be in relationship with His creation?"

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

~ 2 Corinthians 5:21

The power working in us is the same as they mighty strength which God used when he raised Christ from the dead. ~ Ephesians 1:19-20

Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. ~N.T. Wright

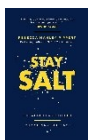


The message of the resurrection is that transformation is possible!

If the Spirit of God could raise Jesus from death to life – if he could revitalize dead brain cells, restore collapsed lungs, restart a heart, and give Jesus his transformed, glorified new body – then that same Spirit can cause those who are spiritually dead to become alive to God!

Questions to ask a skeptic:

- What changed the worldview of Jesus' followers seemingly overnight?
- What caused them to go from utter despair to having profound confidence, courage and joy?
- Why did Christianity grow so rapidly and with such power?
- How do we explain why decades later these same people not only publicly testified that they had seen the risen Lord but were willing to die rather than deny what they knew to be true?



I Don't Really Need Forgiveness

I have a friend who is competent, successful, and assured of her own goodness. She said she never saw the need for a “crutch” like believing in God. Recently she told me of her outrage upon learning that her niece had been sexually assaulted by her boss. We talked at length and I listened with sympathy and concern. Towards the end of our conversation, I said, “Mary, we’ve had several conversations about faith. I want to be sure you know that the God of the Bible is morally outraged by what has happened to your niece. He stands against all forms of injustice and abuse.”

Mary said, “Well, if there is a God, then he needs to do something about the horrible moral mess on our planet, and he clearly hasn’t!”

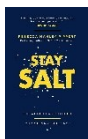
“Mary, God has done something!” I responded. “It is why he sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for your sin.”

She said, “But Becky, what that predator did wasn’t Jesus’ fault! Her boss is the one who needs to be punished – not Jesus. Otherwise, where the justice?”

“You have hit the nail on the head,” I replied. “You are right that crimes must have consequences; otherwise justice becomes a mockery. But what if the problem is larger and wider than we realize? Clearly, some people commit more outrageous and blatant sin than others, but in God’s eyes we have all rebelled. All of us have chosen to run our own lives. It is why our planet is in this mess. You are also correct that it isn’t God’s fault that the human race rebelled. Yet the extraordinary message of the gospel is that God let the punishment for our sin fall on himself. God stepped in by sending Jesus. The righteous died for the unrighteous, so that we can be restored to God through our faith in Jesus.”

She answered, “Becky, you know that I’m not a Christian. I have always laughed at the Christian belief that we’re all sinners, but I’m not laughing anymore. I used to believe in my own goodness, but what I’ve come to see isn’t just the evil of that predator – it’s the murderous rage that I feel towards him. What this experience has taught me is that none of us are innocent.”

It was the first crack I had ever seen in her view of herself.... We need to show people that their response of anger and indignation over horrific wrongdoing is something that God feels as well. It could be the catalyst that helps them understand why God’s anger and judgment over human sin is justified.



The Resurrection speaks to our greatest felt need – the need to be known and loved.

God has wired us to love and to be loved, to know and to be known. When Dick and I lived in Europe we did a lot of evangelistic ministry with university students. Often students shared with us their immense loneliness.

How is the resurrection of Jesus relevant to people like this? Because the risen Jesus assured the disciples that he would never leave them nor forsake them, and that he would send his Spirit to accompany them, and that Jesus would answer their prayers from heaven. The reason they could count on him was because he was alive from the dead! It is our relationship with the risen Jesus that meets our longing for love... it's also why our love for unbelievers is so important – it provides the evidence that Jesus is alive.

In the article, Simple Ways to Be Missional (Verge Network), you'll find many ways to begin engaging your neighbors, your co-workers, and in your city. A small sampling includes:

1. Stay outside in the front yard longer; sit on the front porch.
2. Walk your dog regularly in your neighborhood.
3. Invite neighbors for dinner; start a weekly open meal night!
5. Have a game night (yard games outside; board games inside).
6. Grow a garden and give out extra to neighbors.
7. Eat regularly with co-workers.
8. Invite your co-workers to do service projects you are involved in.
9. Be a regular; get to know the people working at those places.
10. Coach a little league sports team.

Full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources

Rosaria Butterfield in the article, The Best Weapon is an Open Door, says, "Instead of starting with talk, we need to start by listening, and listening well. In post-Christian communities, your words may seem only as strong as your relationships. So learn... and try to be some earthly good to them. Your best spiritual weapon is an open door, a set table, a fresh pot of coffee, and a box of Kleenex for the tears that spill. Because tears will spill. God has written eternity on the hearts of us all. Get to know your neighbors well enough to know where it hurts.... Show – as well as tell – that Jesus comforts the suffering. Being available to neighbors means cutting back on your entertainment indulgences, building in margin time in your day, and budgeting to feed many more people than those who share your last name. Make sacrifices for your unsaved neighbors that mean something. Go out of your way for them."



Theo, the London hairdresser

The next time I went to the hair salon, I had a new hairdresser, Ruth. She told me that right before Theo left, he shared at their staff meeting our entire conversation. I was stunned to hear Ruth repeat verbatim everything I had said. Ruth said, “The staff were so touched, Becky, by how you saw Theo’s pain and reached out to him. We’ve been so worried about him. Theo said he always felt very loved by you, but that you also challenged him and made him think. Like when you told him that to find the love he was looking for, he needed to get his spiritual identity sorted first. That we get into trouble when we worship a person instead of God because no person can bear the weight of being our god. That really struck us, because most of us are struggling in our romantic relationships.”

As I was about to leave, she added, “I hope you don’t mind me asking, but we all wonder what you’re like in your professional role as a

Christian, when you speak to groups. One guy said, “I wonder when she speaks to crowds if she still sounds like our Becky?”

I said, “Ruth, it’s amazing you are saying this, because the BBC has asked me to give a live talk for their Radio 4 program called Sunday Morning Worship. It’s in three weeks, though I can’t imagine the staff would be willing to get up at 8:30 in the morning!”

... (A week after the program aired) I walked into the hair salon, and to my astonishment, all the staff started clapping and said in unison, “We all got up to hear you!”

One young employee, Michael, said, “Becky, I was really looking forward to hearing you, but I had a rather boozy night on Saturday. I live with my parents, and when I came downstairs Sunday morning, my mum was sipping coffee at the kitchen table and listening to the radio. As I poured my coffee, I suddenly shouted, ‘Oh my gosh, that’s Becky on the radio! Turn it up!’ Mum looked at me in amazement and said, ‘You actually know the preacher?’ I said, ‘Yes, she’s a friend of mine!’

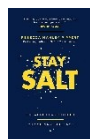
“So as we sipped our coffees we listened to your talk. Mum and I spoke for a longtime afterwards about what it would mean for us if Jesus had truly been resurrected. Mum thinks you may be right, and I said that even I might agree. But Becky, I’m still a young man. If I became a Christian, how much would it have to impact my current lifestyle?”

When I sat down in the chair, Ruth said, “Last Saturday I told my partner of five years that we had to get up early Sunday morning to hear you. As I’ve told you before, I vaguely believe in some kind of deity. My partner is agnostic, and we have never had a discussion about faith. But after the radio show he said, ‘You know, I am really intrigued by what Becky said. Do you think you could find any more videos of her online?’”

... As I was leaving, I asked Ruth what had caused the staff to get up so early to listen to a sermon.

“Because we saw how much you truly cared for Theo,” she answered. “He had another client who is a Christian, but she was judgmental. And other clients would just tell him to not worry. But you saw his pain and even suggested that he had a deeper problem that he was overlooking. You helped him, and it really touched us.”

People are watching us more than we realize, to see if our lives match our words. When they see the love of Christ demonstrated, it softens the soil and makes them curious to find out more about God. They are experiencing the transformation that the risen Jesus has caused in us even as they are hearing about the claims that the resurrection makes on them.

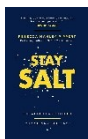


We are living in a time of great turmoil and confusion, when many people feel vulnerable and frightened, even despairing, without knowing why. **People need hope, and the resurrection of Jesus gives them hope.**

The purpose of the resurrection is not for us to sit back and wait for heaven, but to live in such a way that everything we are, say and do causes unbelievers to want to investigate the life of Jesus; and then, when the time seems right, we can invite them to give their lives to Jesus so they too can experience his transforming, resurrection life as they walk with us towards eternity.

J.I. Packer, in *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, emphasizes that the essence of evangelism is the communication of the gospel, but without forgetting one salient truth:

“Evangelism is man’s work but the giving of faith is God’s”.



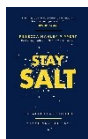
Evangelism comprises of three things:

The act of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word (proclamation) and deed (actions) and invitation (calling people to trust Christ as Lord and Savior).

Overcome Struggles of Fear with Openness

- *Afraid to offend the skeptic?* Share your fear by saying, “You know, I am truly excited about my faith, and I want to share it with you. But I’m so afraid that I might turn you off that I hesitate”.
- *Afraid of being rejected?* Consider the Apostle Paul who was flogged, beaten, left for dead, hated, slandered – all for the gospel. His natural fears didn’t impact what mattered most to him – fearing God.
- *Afraid of not being able to answer someone’s question?* Affirm the question(s) being asked, possibly asking for more background, and pay attention to an emotion tied to the question. Be okay with affirming the question and acknowledging you don’t have an answer. Be authentic and honest, knowing our faith isn’t diminished because we can’t answer every question.

*As the late Eugene Peterson poignantly wrote,
“The Bible is not a script for a funeral service, but it is the
record of God always bringing life where we expected to
find death. Everywhere it is a story of resurrection.”*



Open to Conversation

As I settled into my seat on the plane I met Sue, who was seated next to me. I had work that I had planned to do, but since she was quite chatty and seemed to want to talk, I put away my materials and silently asked God to guide our conversation.

I began by asking questions to learn who she was and to see where we might have common interests. It didn't take long before we discovered that we both liked to travel and learn about different cultures, and that we loved books, jazz and films.

Then Sue began sharing some of her views, and I quickly realized that we had very different worldviews. (This, of course, is where we often stumble as Christians, because we aren't sure what to say when someone makes a statement we do not agree with.)

At one point in our conversation Sue said, "I really believe in the essential goodness of human nature."

I asked her, "I'm just curious – what do you think about the state of the world? How do you think society is doing?"

"Oh, the world is falling apart. It's a mess!"

"Ok, so help me understand how the world can be a mess when it's filled with entirely good people?"

"That's a good question!" Sue said. Then she offered this analysis: "I think our problem stems from two sources. People either have addiction issues and need a recovery program, or they are psychologically wounded and need therapy. Don't you agree?"

"I agree that these are real problems and those solutions have helped people," I replied. But what if we learn to live in recovery from our immediate addiction only to discover that our problem is deeper still? What if our ultimate addiction is to ourselves? What if, at our core, we have a heart problem?"

"I think I may actually agree with you," she answered. "But who on earth has the power to heal an addiction to ourselves? And where do you go for a rehab of the heart."

“Honestly, I can’t think of anyone or anything but God.” I said. “In fact, that is what ultimately led me from agnosticism to becoming a Christian – but that’s a long story.”

“I’d really like to hear your story!” said Sue. And from there, for the rest of the flight we had a significant conversation about the Christian faith.

We landed and as we retrieved our luggage and said good-bye, she suddenly said, “Becky, I feel a bit shy about saying this, but I want to continue our conversation. If I emailed, would you write me?” I told her I’d be delighted.

Want to better be able to tell your own story of faith?

Check out the following resources at kettlebrook.org – media - resources:

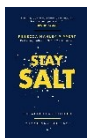
- Having Intentional Gospel Conversations, Todd Morr
- Telling Our Story with Jesus as the Hero
- True Story: From Creation to Restoration, Saturate Resources

From Gospel Fluency (Saturate Resources), “Just as God’s Story through Scripture can be seen through: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration, we can better understand our story and, other people’s stories through the same lens. Consider the following as your look at your life and listen to other people’s story - all in light of God’s Story.

- Creation: In what do we find our identity or sense of purpose and significance?
- Fall: Whom or what is the fundamental problem we blame for the things that are broken in our lives?
- Redemption: Whom or what are we looking to as our savior to rescue or deliver us?
- Restoration: What does transformation look like and what is our ultimate hope for the future?

Full resources at: kettlebrook.org – media - resources

“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love the neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” ~ Mark 12:29-31



Jesus demonstrated that to relate well to people, we must be radically identified with people in love and yet radically different in holiness. To identify with people is to walk alongside them in solidarity and compassion, just as Jesus did. People is Jesus' day thought holy men could only be found in synagogues, but Jesus' work was often in the marketplace or at the meal table. He had a "go to them," not a "come to me," approach. He went to weddings and partied; he ate meals with people who were considered to be despicable sinners. He expressed compassion by listening carefully to people, asking questions, responding to their need for healing, and always seeking to understand the person he was talking to....

Our challenge is to go into the world as Jesus did: identifying with people, without compromising our identity of God's people.

Further, Jesus lived life with great expectation because he knew two things. First, he knew that God was always at work and seeking to make himself known. Second, he knew that no matter how far people were from God, all human beings have been created to know and love God.

Our sense of expectation will be greatly strengthened when we remember that God is actively seeking people who cross our paths, that he desires to speak through us, and that people are often more spiritually open than they first appear.

Let me give you an exciting challenge. Ask God each day, “Show me where you are at work today, Lord. Let me have a conversation about you with someone in my life that you are seeking. Don’t let me miss what the Spirit is doing!” This will build your faith and spiritual sensitivity because it will cause you to listen and pay attention to God and to people as you go about your day.

The wonderful thing about Jesus is how he reaches so many different kinds of people....

Following Jesus’ example means we need to pay attention to what the seekers in our lives are searching for and show them how Jesus addresses what they are looking for. We need to ask ourselves:

- What do our non-Christian friends feel they are lacking in their lives? What are they looking for?
- Are there Bible stories that they would find especially relevant?
- Which Biblical pictures or descriptions of Jesus might especially connect with them?

Will we show the world, not in a triumphant or pushy manner but by word and deed, that receiving Christ as Lord makes all the difference – the only truly lasting difference - in our individual lives, our cities, and our world?

~ Rebecca Manley Pippert
