

## Mission Method

### 1. Intro

- In 2011 C@P took part in the NCLS
  - NCLS reviews all aspects of church life across different churches, denominations right across the country
- One of the topics it explores is 'Faith Sharing'
- One of the questions it poses is this
  - "Willingness to invite to a church service here any friends and relatives who do not currently attend church"
    - The results for C@P were
      - 57% said they were willing & invited someone in the last 12 mths
      - Pretty good > higher than the average for the region or denom
  - "Attendees involved in evangelistic or outreach activities"
    - 45% > not bad
  - "Readiness to share faith with others"
    - 17% say they are at ease talking about their faith and look for opportunities
    - 43% say they feel mostly at ease to talk about their faith and do so if it comes up
    - 37% said they find it hard sharing their faith
- Those statistics were from 5 years ago and we'll be participating in the next NCLS later in the year
  - But wouldn't it be fantastic that if in a year's time when we get those survey results back ... that we see a significant shift upwards in those figures?
  - Wouldn't it be great as we seek to double the size of our church that members of C@P are boldly, prayerfully and faithfully seeking opportunities to make the good news of Jesus known to more people than we ever have before
- This is why we are doing our 'Mission Minded' series at the moment and why one of the things we are focusing on this year at C@P is mission
  - Because what these statistics show is that while there is a general willingness to share faith and invite people to church ... many don't feel that comfortable talking about their faith and sharing it
  - Our mission minded series is aimed at
    - Giving us a right motive for mission so we're encouraged to be a church and people who are mission minded

- But also help equip us as a church, so we feel less anxious and more at ease in sharing our faith and inviting others to come and hear the good news of Jesus
- So ... a quick recap
  - Mission motive
    - We want people to know Christ crucified so they are ready to meet Christ crowned
    - When we lack courage or lack compassion ... it's good to remember that we want people to know Christ so they are ready to face him for eternity
  - Mission Community
    - Aliens and strangers in the world
      - Christianity operates on the margins of our culture
      - That means we can expect to be persecuted, ostracised & ridiculed
    - Distinctive
      - Be holy because God is holy, abstain from sinful desires
      - Live such good lives among our community they will see your good deeds and praise God
    - Blessing to the culture
      - Love the community, be good citizens, contribute well to it
- Today, thinking about Mission Method
  - Lots to be said
  - More Christian books written on evangelism than any other topic
  - What do we do? What do we say ... when it comes to being Mission Minded believers
- I want to pick three things
  - The mission minded believer is a person who
    - Prays
    - Proclaims
    - Responds

## 2. A mission minded believer prays

- When we seek to talk to people about Jesus ... prayer must be the first thing we do
  - If you do not pray for unbelievers and yourself as you seek to be mission minded, then do not expect anything to happen

- The Bible tells believers over and over again that God is sovereign > that all things are in his hands and happen according to his good plans and purposes
  - So we're foolish to think we can be a missional community and not be a prayerful community
- This is no more evident when it comes to others hearing and responding to the good news of Jesus
- 1 Corinthians 3:6-9
  - *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow ...<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building*
- In these verses the Apostle Paul says ...
  - the whole harvesting process or building process is ultimately God's work
  - Only he can do it
  - Listen to 3:7 "*neither he who plants no he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow*"
- And so we must pray
- **Application**
- Being a mission minded believer who prays is going to save you and I from two dangers
  - One is pride - thinking that witness is just a human activity
  - The other is futility - thinking that it is all up to me and therefore humanly impossible
- And so in prayer we're right to ask God to do what we humans cannot do
  - We can't give life to the spiritually dead
  - We can't give sight to the spiritually blind ... but he can
- This is a good corrective to those who think that to convert someone
  - you need to be clever
  - you need to have a certain amount of Bible knowledge
  - you need to be an eloquent speaker in order to persuade someone
  - you need to be able to refute all the questions a person asks
- No - not one spiritual step happens except by the grace and power of God
  - And so we need to pray that he would do his work
- And as we pray ... this frees the Christian from despairing when others don't respond as we would hope

- And it encourages you when you feel inadequate and feeble in sharing the gospel
  - Because at the end of the day .. it is God who makes things group
  - You and I are just spreading the seed
  
- Another passage which is very helpful for us in this ... is Colossians 4:2-5
  - <sup>2</sup> *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.* <sup>3</sup> *And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.* <sup>4</sup> *Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.* <sup>5</sup> *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*
  
- In these verses, Paul shows the priority of prayer before the ministry of speaking to people
  - In v 3 he says '*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message*'
    - In other words, ask God to make it possible for people to hear and understand the gospel
  
- So you see ... here is the priority of prayer
  - It must precede all we do when it comes to being a missional community
  - Because behind any form of effective mission must be prayer
  
- **Application**
- Like Paul, Christians need to pray to God and ask that
  - God would give opportunities for mission with those God has placed in your life
  - For boldness for you to take those opportunities
  - For the Holy Spirit would convict people of the truth of the gospel ... and bring them to repentance and faith
  - That they would see the need to know Christ crucified if they are to be ready to face Christ crowned
  
- To help you do this you can use a prayer app on your phone like PrayerMate to help remind you who and what to pray for
- Of course, you can use all times and all sorts of triggers to pray
  - Pray for that parent you know as you are driving the kids to school
  - Pray for opportunities at work as you travel to work
  - Pray the person you are about to invite to church will say 'yes'

- Pray that God would bring someone into your life that wants to know Jesus
- Someone has said that prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance but laying hold of his willingness
  - So to ask for the eternal welfare of someone is to ask for something dear to God's Heart
  - He wants all people to be saved
- So don't be fooled into thinking that a prayer is wasted or unnecessary because there's no immediate answer
  - Rather pray to the one who deeply desires to save all people
  - And know that his wisdom, power and love will translate it into action in the most perfect way

### 3. A mission minded believer proclaims

- Last we week we said that a missional community is to be
  - a distinctive community that is to be holy and abstain from sinful desires
  - a culture blessing community that loves the culture and does good within it
- This is so important when it comes to being a mission minded community
  - Unless Christians take this holistic approach to mission ... people won't listen to its message
  - If people only see the mission community evangelising they'll conclude that Christian's are solely out to increase the size of their tribe and their power ... rather than to love people
  - And so the more Christians are a distinct culture blessing community the more effective our mission will be
  - Because loving the community ... and blessing the community ... and loving others creates plausibility for the gospel to be proclaimed
- However, if that's where you left it ... being distinct and blessing the culture ... there'd be no mission
  - That's because for mission to happen there must also be proclamation
- To illustrate – let me read you a Christian blog post (satire)
  - *COLUMBUS, OH—Stephanie Goodwill of Wysh Financial Corporation announced on Wednesday that she's surprised she hasn't had the opportunity to share her faith at work.*

*"I've worked at this company for 15 years," Goodwill revealed during a phone interview Thursday. "I've gotten to know lots of people I work with. Take Joe—he's always talking about his marriage troubles. And Kathy? She's a single mom who talks a lot about how hard it is raising three kids on her own. I really think they need Jesus. I'm sure any day now they'll start asking me about Him, right?"*

*"It really shouldn't be that complicated," she continued. "I mean, I smile at people as I pass them in the hall. I hold doors open for people. I even have a good attitude on conference calls! I still don't understand why people don't ask me if Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life."*

*"I guess all I can do is keep praying and keep waiting," she added.<sup>1</sup>*

- In Colossians 4:2-4 Paul reminded us of the priority of prayer
  - And he specifically asks the Colossian Christians for prayer so that he might clearly proclaim the message of the gospel to others
  
- Notice also it Paul and his companions are going out to proclaim ... not just sitting around waiting for people to come to them
  - Because he asks for God to open the door for their message
- Proclaiming the gospel ... means going out with the gospel
  - Of reaching into and connecting with the culture and community
  - Not sitting back ... like Stephanie Goodwill hoping others will come to you
  
- Some of you might say
  - "well Stu, that was Paul ... he was the world's greatest evangelist and missionary"
  - "that's not really my gifting and aren't we better off leaving it to the real evangelists and professionals like you?"
  
- When you look at the spread of the gospel throughout history ... normally it was ordinary Christians who were taking the gospel out
  - That's because Gospel ministry is not something done by pastors with the support of ordinary Christian's
  - Rather it's something done by ordinary Christians the support of pastors
  
- So ... what do you say?
  - You want to tell ppl the gospel

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<sup>1</sup> <http://babylonbee.com/news/employee-still-waiting-co-workers-ask-faith/>

- You can do that by remembering a key Bible verse
  - Very few verses better or more succinct than 1 Peter 3:18
    - *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God*
  - John 3:16
    - *John 3:16* <sup>16</sup> *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
- Or you can do it by learning a gospel outline that you can have in your head to remind of the things you ought to talk about
- One outline you could use is A-B-C-D
  - A admit - admit your need before God for forgiveness and restoration
  - B believe - believe in the provision of Jesus and his death for sinners
  - C consider - consider the cost to following Jesus & surrendering to him
  - D decide - Decide and pray and in order to enter into his kingdom
- Jesus summarise the gospel in the words 'repent and believe'
  - repentance that turns back to Jesus agrees to serve him
  - believe - that sees Jesus is saviour and in him we need turn and trust
- Another outline is to use is simple three words - identity, mission, call
  - Identity - Who Jesus is
  - Mission - Why he came
  - Call - What he wants from us
- Jesus Identity
  - Jesus is the Christ, the king of the world and king of our life > we are not
- Jesus Mission
  - Jesus came to die for your sin and reconcile you back to God > without him you'll pay for your own sin and have no hope for eternity
- Jesus Call
  - Jesus calls on us to recognise him as Lord and saviour and turn to him in repentance and faith
- It's not about saying everything or saying it eloquently that matters
  - It's about saying enough

- And if you explain these things to someone however hard you found it and however haltingly you said it, that's the gospel
  - You proclaim Christ as he asks you to
  - The rest, as we saw above, is up to God
  
- So get a key verse or a simple outline in your head
  - for the car conversation where you want to be brief but clear
  - for the time over lunch when you get to share the gospel with a work colleague
  
- **Application**
- A another way of proclaiming the gospel is to tell how you were brought to faith in Jesus Christ yourself
  - The great thing about your own testimony is ... the person you're sharing it with can't tell you you're wrong
  - After-all ... it's your story
  
- But when you do share your testimony
- Be authentic
  - share how Christ has made a difference in your life
- Be humble
  - it was all God's work, he's the one who brought you to faith
  - somehow at the end of the sentence or testimony the listener needs to be impressed with Jesus not with you
- Be historical
  - That is ... the ideal testimony speaks of what Jesus did in his life, death and resurrection ... not just what you did in your life recently
- Be relevant
  - Leave them knowing that they need to consider the significance of Jesus for themselves
  
- If you're a person who was brought up in a Christian family ...
  - there's nothing more helpful for many than hearing
    - that your faith was a growing conviction that Jesus lived, died and rose or
    - that you were told the facts and then a time came when you took your own stand
  
- The story of how you came to faith in Christ can be very powerful when proclaiming the gospel to others



**4. A mission minded believer responds**

- As we've talked about last week ... we are living in an increasingly post-Christian culture ... where most people have little or no interest in the gospel
  - As a result ... most unbelievers will not come to faith via a 10 minute gospel presentation on the back of a serviette
  - They need to go through a series of steps before they come to a point of faith full
  
- And so that's where the mission minded believer needs to be responding to questions and statements from others that will help the person through the process
- If you could place people on a range from 1 to 10 depending on the interest in the gospel
  - with 1 being no interest ... and 10 being a decision to follow Jesus ...
  - we would find that lots people are down the lower end of the scale
  
- And so
  - That means Christians need to find ways of sharing the gospel ... or some aspects of the gospel ... for those who are at points 1 and 2 on the scale ... and not just 8 and 9
  
- In 1 Peter 3:15 Peter says
  - *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*
  
- Clearly ... if an unbeliever says to a Christian ...
  - "So ... why are you a Christian?"; or
  - "So ... I didn't know you went to church. Have you always been religious?"
  - God has laid that one on a platter for you with a big flashing neon sign and siren for you!
  
- But for the most part ... you won't be asked something as direct as that
- But ...
  - you will be asked what you think on a topic
  - you will have opportunity to comment on an issue
  - And these are just as good and generally more plentiful for you to respond as a Christian about the hope you have in Christ

- **Application**

- Imagine as you head off to work this week
  - praying that you'll be a good representative for Jesus and
  - You'll make the most of opportunities because time is short and people may miss out unless someone speaks up
- And then the conversation turns to a terrible tragedy in the news ... and everyone is commenting on it as a disaster
  - And then you're asked for an opinion
  - And you simply say something like
    - "this is not heaven" or
    - "this is a Fallen world" or
    - "this could be a big wakeup call" or even
    - "this is what Jesus predicted"
  - That sentence maybe ignored or may get a response ... but it's an answer with some grace and some salt in it
- Same with a conversation with a parent in the playground or park
- A person says to you they are heading into hospital later to visit their sick mother
  - And your response could be
    - "I'll pray for you"; or
    - "I'll pray for your mother"
  - And that's all you say ... but it speaks a lot for a later conversation
- Responding to the words and situations around you is a huge opportunity to comment on the normal things of life as a Christian or respond to a situation ...
  - And every topic or situation has a Christian perspective ... whether it's government or education or sex or money or parenting
- By raising an aspect of your faith in conversation ... even if that conversation then moves on to other subjects ... you have shown the person you are speaking to
  - the Christian faith is relevant to your life and
  - that it is important in your life and
  - that you are open to them asking you about it
- Every day we are asked questions
  - "what did you do on the weekend?"

- "how was your holiday?"
- "what the book you're reading?"
- ... and every time you are asked you have the opportunity to say something
  - "Yesterday I went to church and the Bible talk was on the topic of idols. And it really made me think about dangerous it is when we love things of this world more than God" or
  - "We had a great holiday. The scenery blew me away and made me realise how amazing this world is that God has created"
  - "It's a Christian book about forgiveness. It's so helpful because it's giving me the right foundation for being able to forgive others that I had found so hard to do before"
- But remember ... we need to listen to people more than we speak to them ... and that means asking questions
  - After all if you want people to ask you questions about what makes you tick ... then you need to ask them questions about what makes them tick

## 5. Conclusion

- Mission method is not about programmes and big events
- Nor is it something we leave to the professionals or the specially gifted
  - Mission is for every member of the body of Christ
  - It's organic, relational, intentional, prayerful and it's gospel centred
- The way the mission minded believer is go about it is by
  - Praying
  - Proclaiming
  - Responding
- I pray ... to the extent we understand
  - Jesus compassion toward us
  - Jesus courage to go to the cross for us
  - It would encourage and challenge us to
    - Show compassion to those God has in our midst
    - Show courage in the face of our fears and anxieties
- So that ...
  - The people we know will all come to know Christ crucified ... so that one day they are ready to meet Christ crowned

## PRAY