

## Sharing Jesus Kept Simple

This article is on *Sharing Jesus Kept Simple*. As an older Christian, I have begun to observe that many of us farther along on this journey incline our well-intended advice to younger Christians towards complexity. With the best of motives, we tell others where *we* are, rather than meeting them where *they* are. As I read the Gospels, I believe Jesus met each person where they were in that specific moment, then nudged them towards the Father's heart, to the degree they were open.

*Let me begin with a disclaimer.*

I'm not good at *sharing Jesus* with the lost. I could share my reasons...or excuses...but that would help no one. Instead, let me share my journey. Look over my shoulder for what you can learn from me and add anything helpful to your unique journey with Jesus.

The wonderful local church where I came to Jesus at twenty-five strongly taught how essential *sharing Jesus* with the lost is. However, I don't remember anyone telling me how or even taking me with them to let me learn from modeling.

*That was my first lesson on sharing Jesus. We are together on mission.*

In seminary, a solid professor described the "necessary Biblical knowledge" before a person could come to Christ. In class, I was check, check, check, in full agreement. Shortly after in a quiet moment, the Spirit reminded me that I didn't know *ANY* of those doctrinal truths when I gave my life to Jesus. *NONE!* I prayed something like this, perhaps my first prayer.

"Jesus these people in my wife's church believe you change lives. I know I can't run my own life. Here is my life, lock, stock and barrel, and I'll take yours in return. Thanks!"

*This was my first lesson on Sharing Jesus Kept Simple*, it's a heart issue, my heart given over wholeheartedly to Him Jesus

By the time I graduated from Seminary and pastored for four years, I had learned four presentations of the Gospel, all beginning with "you are a sinner separated from God." I got so nervous one time when I visited a young couple and was *sharing Jesus* that I confused the "four steps." I shared the first step, leaped over the second, and forgot to ask them key questions in the last step. I was ready to run out with my tail between my legs! Fortunately, I asked them if they "would like to receive Jesus," even though asked faithlessly. The man replied, "I have." In surprise I asked "when?" He stated with a smile, "while you were talking to me!"

*That was my next lesson on Sharing Jesus Kept Simple*, that the Spirit is faithful and in charge.

When my family and I moved to Europe to plant a church, I knew I would need to share Jesus more often. My strength had been studying God's Word and discipling young people, so I was stretched out of my comfort zone. At the end of one of the monthly nationwide team meetings for our denomination, the leader said, "Next month come back and let's explore together the question, 'What's the Gospel?'"

*Before continuing, jot down your thoughts. How would you answer this question?*

I started in the Gospel of John and noted how Jesus shared the Good News with His audience (Gospel means Good News). I read John again, and then again because I was startled! Not once did Jesus share the Good News in ways that aligned with *any* of the methods I learned.

I was a bit nervous at the meeting the next month and let others lead the way. They eloquently shared heavy theology that aligned with the four methods I had learned. I tentatively shared my

conclusions, waiting for responses. One of my teammates was a brilliant theologian, steeped in Christian history. He broke the awkward silence by coming to my rescue!

“None of those methods were meant to lead people to Christ. They arose in times of tent revivals and were used to quickly teach helpers to lay the first steps in a new Christian life of discipleship. At the moment most of them got out of their seats to come forward, that was the act where they gave their life completely to Jesus.”

*That was my next lesson on **Sharing Jesus Kept Simple**. Go to the NT itself for answers.*

A brief summary follows of how Jesus shared in the Gospel of John. But please, don't short-circuit the learning process. After reading what I have written, go to the Gospel of John and decide for yourself.

As a *synopsis*, Jesus pointed to His life through a variety of ways, meeting each person or group where they were as unique people. He drew them in to the Father's heart. Since He acknowledged that each person is the gatekeeper of his or her heart, He never ran their “*stop signs*.”

*Does this seem too simple? “Where's the solid theology?” some may ask.*

If you've read anything I've written, you already know how crucial I believe a solid understanding of Scripture is, and particularly the NT. If you have questions, read my short article, **God's Word Kept Simple**.<sup>1</sup> His love and yearning to draw us into His heart transcends knowledge. Jesus meets those without Him with the “*I am...*” revelation they most need. Then when hearts connect, even trembling with unanswered questions, faith ignites eternal life as a gift from Him. Here's what Jesus said.

“**I am** the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except **through me**”  
(Jesus in John 14:6, the sixth “*I am*” statement, this to His disciples, **emphasis**).

*That was my next lesson on **Sharing Jesus Kept Simple**. Jesus **IS** the Good News! We pass from death to life, not through right doctrine, but intimate, heart connection with the true Vine.<sup>2</sup>*

Jesus undisputedly points to Himself as the *way* to His Father, the *truth* about His Father and eternal *life* available in His Father. How much clearer could Jesus be about **sharing Jesus** as central to the Gospel? Point to the Father's heart through the Son's actions.

*Jesus **IS** the Good News!*

*Let me quickly list a few of the specific encounters Jesus had with individuals and with the crowds to whet your appetite.*

*Nicodemus in John 3:1-21: Nicodemus was **the** expert teacher in Israel. Apparently, people flocked in from around the world to hear him teach. Every person separate from Jesus has counterfeit ways to fulfill essential needs in their lives that only the Father can fill. Four of these are *belonging* and *purpose*, *beauty* and *justice*. Some call these “*echoes of a dethroned King*” because they point back to the shattered image of God in humanity. Nic chased counterfeit *purpose* in his life through his teaching since he had no *personal* relationship with the Father. Jesus met him right there. He chided him that He should know from His study of the OT that every person needs to be born again. Jesus points to His Father's loving heart that sent Jesus to rescue, redeem and restore (John 3:16).*

*The Samaritan Woman at the Well in John 4:4-42: For me, this is the best single model in Scripture of how to lead a person gently, yet persistently, to the Father's heart. This woman had attempted to fulfill her legitimate need for *belonging* in an illegitimate way with men. She had six*

divorces in her background and wasn't married to her current fling. She was drawing water at noon, in the heat of the day, because she had been ostracized by her village. She was *alone*. What a sad word for those made in the image of community. Notice how Jesus uses the natural (His physical thirst and the water in the well) to gradually guide her to the place to respond to Jesus' direct statement. "*I who speak to you am the Messiah*" (John 4:25-26). She immediately dropped her most prized possession (her water jar), ran back to the village that had ostracized her (John 4:28-29), and a revival broke out (John 4:39-42).

*The Man Healed at the Pool in John 5:1-15*: This man had been an invalid for thirty-eight years as he came to these healing waters. However, his *victim-mentality* was his most crucial problem, not his physical limitations. Yet Jesus met him at the point of his felt need and healed him, then challenged him to all-in discipleship (John 5:7; 8+14). The following verses provide an insightful glimpse into Jesus' *simple* plan. As the Model Man, the first entirely complete human Being since humanity's fall in Genesis 3, Jesus was a man under the authority of His Father...*always*. Jesus "*did to the one what He yearns to do for all.*"

"Very truly I tell you, the Son can **do nothing by himself**; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does"  
(John 5:19, **emphasis**).

1. *The Crowds Are Hungry in John 6:1-15+25-71*: Jesus fed the 5,000 and now the people want to follow Him for the miraculous signs He performs. For those chasing miracles, Jesus reminds them to instead follow hard after eternal life by believing Jesus (resting their entire life in Him, John 6:26-29). Then He reveals Himself as the One who provides the principal "staple" of life, filling our deepest spiritual hunger ("*I am the Bread of life,*" John 6:35). Jesus ministered to the *crowds* but focused His time on training up His *disciples* because He knew how fickle humanity is (John 6:60-71).

2. *The Crowds Are Blind in John 8:2-12+13-59*: What a fascinating encounter of how blind self-righteous people can be, especially the religious (8:2-11). Notice the gentle, yet uncompromising way, that Jesus met the woman caught in adultery.<sup>3</sup> Jesus reaches out to those who have pridefully deceived themselves that how they see life *is* right. He simply says, "*I am the Light of the world*" (John 8:12). He invites them in with the promise that His *disciples* will not walk in moral darkness, but provides purpose and direction. Read the rest of John for a fascinating, bedrock description of true disciples (John 8:31-32) and how He answers His critics.

3. *The Crowds Feels Unprotected in John 10:1-10*: "*I am the Gate for my sheep*" (John 10:7). Jesus is the entryway into protection from life-threatening dangers.

4. *The Crowd Needs Tender Touch and Protection in John 10:2-39*: "*I am the Good Shepherd*" (John 10:11,14). Jesus is the only One who gives life with tender touch, care and security. Carefully read John 10:27-30 for a glimpse into His relationship with His people.

5. *Two of Jesus' Favorites Mourn and the Crowd Looks on in John 11:1-44*: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*" Jesus breaks the power of death and provides authentic life.

6. *Jesus Gives His Disciples a Short Summary of How to Share Jesus in John 14:6*: "*I am the way, the truth and the life.*"

7. *Jesus Gives His Disciples a Simple Picture of the Connected, Fruitful Life to Expect in John 15:1-17*: "*I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Gardener [and] you are the branches.*" Jesus is the Life-Giver as the Father grafts His followers in so we may draw everything needed for abundant life.

*How can Jesus provide all this for a needy world?*

In John 8:58, Jesus makes two improbable claims that rocked the world of the Jews. *First*, Jesus claims to have existed before Abraham who had died perhaps 2,000 years prior to the birth of Jesus in Nazareth. *Second*, He also equated Himself to God by taking the holy name that God revealed to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14, “*I am*”). Jesus meets our deep inner yearnings right where each is with this sampling of His “*I am...*” presence and provision.

Jesus ***IS*** the Good News so invite others in to “*come & see.*”

*So, what can we learn about **sharing Jesus** with others from His model?*

Jesus shared naturally on His way in a variety of settings with both individuals and groups, as His Father opened up opportunities. I see no set formula or steps in our **sharing Jesus**. When we bump into people on our way of doing life, cultivate the interruption. Seek to make some kind of connection, like Jesus in John 4. Look for a possible *echo* of the shattered image and draw them in at that point. If you hear or see a need, perhaps ask, “*How can I pray for you now?*”<sup>4</sup> And then be OK with any “*no*” you encounter because Jesus did not run their “*stop signs.*”

Jesus pointed to Himself as the Good News of the Father’s love. **We** point to the Father’s heart **through** the life and provision of Jesus.

*My most powerful lesson on **Sharing Jesus Kept Simple** is: Jesus **IS** the Gospel. So don’t complicate what God made **simple**.*

The Spirit of God takes Jesus and presents Him to those without Jesus as the most remarkable person who ever lived. **God’s part, our part. For our part**, we walk through the world with our hearts intentionally open to what the Father is doing at the moment, like Jesus did (John 5:17+19). We are a “mailman or mailwoman” who deliver what we are given. We are “witnesses,” and a witness only tells what he or she has experienced firsthand, nothing more.

Such a **simple** approach keeps the focus where it should, on Jesus, not on our cleverness, persuasive words or passion. For many of us, it’s easy to talk about what’s a passion on our hearts, whether movies or twitter or art or fantasy football. As we grow more like Jesus and increase our love, He becomes the highest passion in our lives.

*How high is your all-in, wholehearted passion for Jesus?*

Discover what fits you best. I’m still not great at **sharing Jesus** but I’m learning to keep it **simpler**. When an opportunity seems appropriate, I often respond like this. “*I’m a follower of Jesus. I know Jesus is alive, sees you and cares.*” “*How can I pray for you now?*” You can tell a lot about where they are by how they respond to that. Be sensitive to the Spirit. You cannot convert anyone, but the Spirit does it very well by preparing and working through you.

**Sharing Jesus Kept Simple** leaves many questions unanswered, but that’s OK. I believe *layer learning* is the healthiest way of natural learning (solidifying one level of a topic first before deepening it).

In your time, you may be stirred to dig farther into **sharing Jesus**. My free PDF of a rough draft of a stream of thoughts on evangelism called **Together on Mission** may add depth when you are ready for it. My favorite articles is the amazing partner we have in *The Holy Spirit and Evangelism*. Second is Paul’s very practical approach to open up and embrace opportunities for **sharing Jesus** in daily life from Colossians 4:2-6 in *Two Powerful Models*.

For a free PDF of most of this article, **click here**.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, if they have some basics of who Jesus is and who we are without Him, this accelerates disciple making, yet it's not a barrier to a God who spoke the universe into existence in six days.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus' normal way of training was to first do it to them, then later explain. BTW, this is opposite of how we normally learn in our culture. No wonder we know more than we put into practice. I'm beginning with the sixth "*I am*" because I'm writing to those who are already disciples of Jesus to clarify sharing Jesus in the 21st century.

<sup>3</sup> BTW, did you ever wonder where the man was, if she was "caught" red-handed in the act of adultery?

<sup>4</sup> I like this simple question that I heard from y pastor, Travis Twyman from Inland Vineyard Church. But then, if they say "yes," keep your prayer short like Jesus normally did. If they say "no," follow our Master and do *not* run their "*stop signs*."