

Natalie Elizabeth

BORN: August 1, 2008

PARENTS: Nick & Jessica Cassell
925.997.3238

GRANDPARENTS:

Craig & Vicky Cassell

John & Chris Marshal

GREAT GRANDMOTHER: Barbara Marshal

GREAT-AUNT: Brenda Eckert

ETERNAL VALUE OF CHILDREN

Matt. 19:13 ¶ Then little **children** were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. **But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.**

Matt. 19:14 ¶ Jesus said, "Let the little **children** come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

One of our jobs as parents is to PROVIDE ACCESS for our kids to Jesus.

VOW of the Parents (Nick and Jessica):

Do you vow before God, family and these witnesses here today to by God's grace and power to:

1. Be the ones to first introduce **NATALIE** to Jesus
2. Instruct her in the way of the Lord teaching what him what pleases God
3. Impart into her the tools necessary for godliness and life
4. Make your home a microcosm of the church where worship, prayer, witness, study of God's word and fellowship flourish
5. Help her discover her calling and purpose in this world and equip her for "every good work" done in Christ.

Topic: Missions and the Word of God
Big Idea: Persuasion comes not from a speech, but from a caring person who is passionate about what they are saying.
Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Giving for 2009:

Before we dive into the word this morning, I want to dialogue for a few minutes **about financial EXPECTATIONS in giving for the upcoming year.** I want to be up front with you about the giving requests for this year. Sometimes in church it can feel like we are constantly asking for money. I want you to realize that the leadership of this church views **each dollar as a “sacred trust”** and we want to give you a preview for the upcoming year.

First there is THE LORD’S TITHE (or 10%). It is His treasure, not ours, and that is to be the first and best of earnings. These are the funds that we use to operate the church.

Second, there is MISSIONS. In your hand is a pledge card. We will collect those in two weeks and they are used to support our missionary partners.

Third, we will be rolling out A BUILDING CAMPAIGN. We were in city hall even this week beginning discussions about construction of a new church in July of 2010. We are planning a Special Business Meeting to discuss this in more detail in February after our Missions month.

Finally, there will be moments where **A SPECIAL PROJECT or A SPECIFIC NEED** (like alms) surfaces that may need our attention.

I say all this because I know we are in a recession and I want you to at least have some expectation on how we are going to present opportunities for involvement. **Giving is always a reflection of generosity and stewardship and I find this church to be high on both.**

Introduction:

I hope this statement doesn't offend anyone, but I hate "telemarketing". Now I did not say I hate "telemarketers". As followers of Christ, we are called to "love" everybody. But I think you get the picture. Let me give you a few reasons why:

1. They often call during dinner.
2. They ask me how I am doing, but don't really want to hear.
3. They presume I **care** about their product
4. They presume I **need** their product
5. When I ask them how they got my phone number, they often back peddle.
6. When I ask them if I can make my pitch for the gospel before they make theirs, they grow silent.
7. It is impersonal transaction.
8. They are more interested in the sale than in me.

Unfortunately, **SOME PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH VIEW CHRISTIANS WHO TALK ABOUT THEIR FAITH IN A SIMILAR MANNER.** From the listener's perspective, many people feel Christians are simply trying to make a sell. They only want to: 1) **get out their "speech" out,** 2) **get that decision,** 3) **perhaps give a small booklet** and 4) **then move on to the next customer.** And if they don't respond the way we want, we simply go on to the next target. **Giving a speech is NOT persuasive communication.**

This second week in our Mission's Month, I want us to approach the critical topic of "Missions and the Word of God." My angle this morning will flow more on the "HOW" side than the "WHAT" side. The topic I want to address is an area I find has too little discussion and that is **HOW ARE WE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.** To often in the church we tell people to **PRAY, to READ THEIR BIBLE and TO TELL OTHERS THE GOSPEL STORY.** However, we rarely take time to tell them **HOW to communicate the Gospel in a way that persuades.**

This morning I want us to focus on **ONE** verse. I feel a bit bad for drowning you last week, so I thought I would be merciful this week. The verse is found in 1

Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 5. It is Paul's strategy for persuasive communication of the word of God. It reads:

**“Our gospel came to you
not simply with words,
but also with power,
with the Holy Spirit
and with deep conviction.
You know how we lived among you for your sake.”**

Paul opens up with a simple phrase **“Our gospel came to you.”** Before we move on any further, I want to linger a bit on this opening phrase. **GOD ALWAYS USES PEOPLE TO SHARE HIS STORY. THE MESSAGE ALWAYS COMES THROUGH A MESSENGER.** He doesn't use angels, cloud formations, water buffalo's or even dreams to tell the gospel. **His primary way to reach PEOPLE is THROUGH other PEOPLE (2x).** Now I am not trying to limit God, but even when people in the Scripture receive an unusual phenomenon to guide the (like the wise men with the star), it almost always requires interpretation by the Scriptures through a person (like the teachers of the Law) to help them get the specifics.

The same is true today. Even though we are talking about missions, I see before me **“a people with a God-ordained mission.”** I am careful to **NOT** call you missionaries. I understand that being a missionary is a specific call to a foreign people group.

That being said, I do want state **A FEW PRESUMPTIONS** before we parse this verse together.

1. I will be addressing Christians today
2. I am addressing Christians today who understand they have a part in the **Great Commission**
3. I am addressing Christians today who understand they have a part in the **Great Commission** which is simply to proclaim God's story and love people regardless of their response.

Now I understand, that each of these presumptions deserves a discussion in and of itself. We will leave that for a later time. For now, and it is my perception of the people in this church understand that: 1) my part in the Great Commission is NOT ONLY FINANCE missionaries, 2) NOT SOLELY to pray for them, 3) but to also SHARE GOD'S STORY MYSELF.

As we focus on the critical topic on MISSIONS and THE WORD OF GOD, I want us to focus on HOW TO SHARE in a manner that PERSUADES.

It is our job to tell the story. It is God's job to bring salvation, healing and wholeness. That being said, THERE ARE A FEW ELEMENTS THE SCRIPTURES GIVE ON HOW TO SHARE IN MANNER THAT WILL TOUCH THE LISTENER.

It is my propition today that "Persuasion comes not from a speech, but from a caring person who is passionate about what they are saying."

Jesus said: "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and *HOW TO SAY IT*" (John 12:49 - italics added). Here, Jesus informs the reader that BOTH HIS *CONTENT* AND HIS *DELIVERY* ARE OF DIVINE INSPIRATION. Most Christians today do not challenge the divine inspiration of the Biblical text. "What to say" is essentially a by-product of "What has been said." However, could the same be said about "How to say it?" Do Christians look for the Spirit's help in how to share? APPARENTLY, FOR JESUS, "THE PACKAGE" OF THE MESSAGE IS AS IMPORTANT AS "THE MESSAGE" ITSELF.

Preview:

So this morning I want to address two HOW question? HOW NOT to share the gospel and then HOW TO SHARE. The first part will come from personal observations growing up in church. The second will come from our text in Thessalonians.

How NOT to do...

1. Don't tell your Weird God Story

We all have one and I suggest to you that it does more harm than good to start off with some story about a dream where an angel named, "Bob" comes to you in a dream and takes you to planet where the inhabitants live in marshmallows drinking diet coke watching American Idol....You get the point. For those who have experienced this grace, I suggest **you tell people the bottom line**. Remember, when it comes to dreams and visions, **the package (or message) is more important than the UPS carrier. (word of knowledge vs. word of wisdom)**

2. Long-windedness

Some people keep the listener hostage. They go on and on. I have been there where as a listener I am thinking, "This would be a good time for the rapture." "God deliver me from this speech." Be merciful to the listener. Remember this is not about you. Good story telling keeps the listener wanting.

3. Fuzziness

Clarity is essential. Tell me one what happened. Get me the before and after and how you changed and do it in 3 minutes or less.

4. Religionese

Every organization, career or age group has their own lexicon that can make an person who steps into their circle feel like an outsider. I remember the first time someone used the word "bling" on me. I stood there wondering, "Should I ask them what that is and look foolish or pretend I get it?" Take out all words like "Born-again", "sanctification", "redeemed", "saved" or "delivered."

5. Superiority

Some people when they share Christ sound to me like they are quoting their resumes. They tell me that Jesus is Lord, but it almost sounds like He wouldn't been able to pull this off without them specifically. Let me tell you, if people sense any arrogance, they are gone.

One of the best books on this topic is Bill Hybels, [Just Walk Across the Room](#).

Things to do when sharing:

Develop friendships - by engaging in the lives of people around them.

Discover stories - before sharing their own story and God's redemptive story.

Discern the next steps - by following the Holy Spirit's direction

Our 401 class

What to DO...

Word of God:

In this text, Paul outlines the fundamental parts of winning speech. Through Paul's missionary team, the gospel came to the Thessalonians in a fivefold manner. We should spend a week on each one of these components, but for now, I want to at least get your minds churning and to convince you about Paul's methodology for persuasion. My hope is that you examine your life compared to his.

1Th. 1:5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words,

First of all, the gospel came, "with words" or, literally, "in word" (ἐν λόγῳ). The "logos" here is both the words necessary for communication as well as the "living word" of God spoken thru the apostle. Paul's reference to "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) in verse five attests to this fact.

My simple request to you to learn how to share "HIS STORY" and "YOUR STORY" is a straightforward, succinct, and personal way.

Regarding **TESTIMONIES (OR MY STORY)**, I always encourage people to start off with an area of struggle first. "Before I met Christ, I wrestled with "fear", "addiction", "loneliness", "jealousy". People relate to struggle much more than victories. Our 401 class will help you with this.

Regarding **THE GOSPEL (OR HIS STORY)**, find ways to present the Gospel in a **CLEAR, SIMPLE** and **PICTURESQUE** manner that is brief and ask the listener essentially, "Where are they on their faith journey?" And love them regardless of how they respond. Once again, don't lead with this. It probably shouldn't be the first topic of conversation. Discern from the Holy Spirit when is the appropriate time. **Be napkin ready.**

However, the gospel did not come “**simply**” in word; speaking was merely a part of the whole picture. Paul mentions that his preaching did not come with words “**alone**” (μόνον). Eloquence and rhetoric alone were insufficient tools in evoking faith from the hearers. Other components were necessary for persuasion and life change.

1Cor. 2:4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power,

1Cor. 2:5 so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

See also 1 Thes. 2:13; also 1 Cors 2:4, 5, where Paul’s λόγος (“word”) and κήρυγμα (“preaching”) are marked not by the persuasive techniques of rhetoric but by “demonstration of the Spirit and power” (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως), in order that the hearers’ faith might be securely based in the power of God, not in human wisdom.

Power:

1Th. 1:5 but also with power,

The second ingredient Paul lists is “power” (ἐν δυνάμει). His speech was delivered with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

This verse points to the **INWARD POWER WITH WHICH THE SPEAKERS** were filled as they gave the message, a power that might show itself in a variety of ways. This made the speakers aware of **God’s special involvement in the gospel and its presentation.**

At times, however, **this power also manifests itself OUTSIDE THE SPEAKER.** The New Testament writers call these moments “**signs and wonders**”. For instance, the central imperative of Mark’s Great Commission is not discipleship, **but proclamation with accompanying signs** (Mark 16:15-18). Miraculous signs were present from the earliest stages in the new life of some of the Pauline churches (cf Gal 3:5).

Power came from “within” and “without”, but also “UPON”. The object of such power was often the listener. **Ultimately, this power produced life change in the responding audience.**

WE ARE NOT CALLED SIMPLY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL. WE ARE ALSO CALLED TO MINISTER TO PEOPLE’S NEEDS (2X). Jesus **TAUGHT** and **PREACHED**, but he also **HEALED** and **DELIVERED** (Matt 4:23; 8:16). These four activities overlap so much that it is difficult to discern where one ends and the other begins. The first two, teaching and preaching, characterize “the proclamation side” of the Christ-follower. The last two, healing and delivering, reflect “the ministry side” of the Christ-follower.

This may mean providing opportunities for people to receive ministry prayer with the elders after service for both physical (James 5:14-15) and relational (James 5:16) healing. The believer should also be wary of the spiritual forces that loom behind the scene causing confusion, strife and separation (John 10:10). Few Christians today contest the fact that demons speak to us. Ironically, most Christians never speak back. Practically speaking, they give mental assent to the existence of the demonic, but in reality they live as if the demonic realm is a non-factor in life and ministry. The Biblical picture is quite different. The early followers of Jesus always spoke directly to the demonic realm and invoked the name of Jesus to remove this harassing influence. They never negotiated with the demonic. They confronted it. On some occasions, this influence from without was the primary force of opposition to the gospel of the kingdom. In others, it was secondary.

Of course, the Bible never limits such ministry activities to a “church” setting. In fact, most healings and deliverance recorded in the New Testament were performed in homes or in the country outside the normal hours of either synagogue or Sunday services.

The New Testament often shows “signs and wonders”, or “healings and deliverances”, accompanying or following the proclamation of the gospel. There is no Biblical indication that such a pattern of proclamation with ministry ever ceased.

The Father is eager to dispense the supernatural effects of which He alone is the direct cause. History validates this. Periods of the Reformation and the First and Second Great Awakenings should arouse a holy covetousness for this outpouring from heaven that ignites the our lives with a holy fire and confirming signs. The people of God must ask for the Spirit’s power and signs to accompany the proclamation of the

word until the Father fulfills His promise of the Spirit to assist in teaching, preaching, healing and delivering. On this basis Christ's kingdom will advance.

Deep Conviction (or Passion):

1Th. 1:5 and with deep conviction.

PASSION is the third ingredient of unction. It is significant that Paul differentiates “deep conviction” from both word and power and places it in a category of its own. “With deep conviction” ([ἐν] πληροφορία πολλῇ) refers to an effect upon both the speaker and the listening audience. Regarding the speaker, πληροφορία fuels the speaker’s emotions, gestures and tone as he shares the gospel. Regarding the listener, πληροφορία also refers to the conviction the Holy Spirit produces in the receptive hearer. Paul also records the measure of conviction as [ἐν] πληροφορία πολλῇ, “in fullest conviction.” This conviction can be more impressive and more lasting than the persuasion produced by spectacular or miraculous signs.

The believer needs to be filled with an earnestness that might be called “GRAVITY”. Intensity of feeling, the weight of an argument, a deep and pervading solemnity of mind, a savor of the power of godliness, fervency of spirit, zeal for God - these are the marks of the “GRAVITY OF THE MESSAGE.” Others call it “BLOOD-EARNESTNESS”.

ALL PASSIONATE SHARING IS ROOTED IN A FEELING OF DESPERATION. I fear we have lost much of this in today’s world. The stat that plagues my soul today is 4%. That is how many people in our city today are in God’s house according to CityServe. At what point do we consider this area lost to the gospel? 3%...2%...1%. I don’t have time or energy to “play church” or “entertain the faithful.” Our generation lives at crossroad. We will stem the tide and begin the reversal in our city or will be the last generation to see it fall to other forces than Christ. Look in the book of Revelation, those warnings by Jesus were real to those 7 churches. Turkey today is 99.98% Muslim

and Christ's church is barely a memory. "Oh God deliver us from such thinking that is so inward that we lose fact that millions of people in front of us are facing a Christ-less eternity without the gospel." The weight of this fact, the gravity of it, must grip our soul.

When I returned to Fremont, I found 3 missionaries working in the city I was born and nurtured in the faith. One from Brazil, one from China and one from Korea. Their presence in part is a testimony to the failure of the local church to reach the city for Christ. If we don't reach Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore and San Ramon for Christ, if we don't make ourselves available to His use, if we don't release our resources to touch others, God may be stirring up a soul an ocean away who will.

Similar in effect, but different in expression is the **"GLADNESS"** that comes in sharing. The gospel is "good news" and that means it is full of joy. However, **Christ-followers cannot pass on what they do not have themselves. A joyless life is no advantage to the people of God (Heb. 13:17 & 1 Pet. 5:2-3). God cannot look glorious to the people if some glimpse of that glory does not show up in the soul of the you and I. Furthermore, if a testimony or sharing the gospel comes WITHOUT gladness, people hear legalism not the liberating message of the gospel.**

GRAVITY tells the audience what they are **SAVED "FROM"**. **GLADNESS** tells the audience what they are **SAVED "TO"**. On one hand there must be **A "SOLEMNITY"** in our soul that communicates that eternal stakes that are before every listener. On the other, **"BLESSED ASSURANCE"** must rise in such a fashion that the delights of salvation are evident to all.

Our sharing should not be PURELY EMOTIONAL; nor should it be PURELY INTELLECTUAL. Careful not to lead with his intellectual prowess, Paul told the

Ephesians' elders, "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one *with tears.*" (Acts 20:31).

How we lived (Lifestyle):

1Th. 1:5 You know how we lived among you for your sake.

Lifestyle is those actions and events that occur *AFTER* we share the Gospel. Paul not only preached the Gospel. He lived it. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT HIS AUDIENCES DIDN'T JUST NEED TO HEAR THE GOOD NEWS. THEY NEEDED TO SEE IT AS WELL. Any message designed to change its hearers' lives would be undermined if the Christian's conduct were noticeably inconsistent with it. Drawing upon their observation of him, Silas and Timothy, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "*You know how we lived among you for your sake.*" Throughout his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul carries his readers along with him with such expressions as οἶδατε ("you know how") to substantiate the validity of his message (cf 1 Thes. 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 3:3, 4; 4:2; 5:2).

PAUL BELIEVED THAT PEOPLE WOULD NEVER EMBRACE A MESSAGE THAT CONTRADICTED THE CONDUCT OF HIS OWN LIFE. In fact, Paul would regularly use his own life as an illustration of his message. Paul was confident that his actions, his words and his motives would substantiate the gospel he shared. He was not afraid to put his life on display to validate the gospel. "*Follow my example,*" he would say. "*Imitate me.*" To the Thessalonians he writes: "*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Thes. 1:6). Similarly to the Corinthians he urges: "*Therefore I urge you to imitate me* (1 Cor. 4:16) and "*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* (1 Cor. 11:1). Essentially, he was saying, "*If you need a role model, an example of what a follower of Christ looks like, then look at me.*"

There is no doubt that the believer's lifestyle affects the acceptance of his or her message. Paul certainly understood this when he said, "*Conduct yourselves in a*

manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Philip. 1:27). The believer who declares the Word with authority is under that Word and must submit to its authority. **True sharing is never stale or dull or academic, but fresh and potent with the living authority of God.** But the Scripture comes alive to the listener only if it has come alive to the Christian first. The Apostle Paul said it this way: ***“I delivered to you what I first received.”*** One cannot deliver to others, what one has not fully received himself. Whatever God desires to do in the others, typically happens first in us.

It is important then to differentiate between exegetical authority and experiential authority. One has to do with the quality of one’s research. The other has to do with the crushing on one’s soul. One is learned. The other is lived. One is theory. The other is experiential. Together, they forge an authority that fuses personal conviction with an understanding and trust in His Word that transcends the tumultuous trials of life. How else can Job say, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15). Friends, our authority depends **NOT ONLY** on the closeness of our adherence to the text we are handling, but **ALSO** on the forcefulness with which it has spoken to one’s own soul.

The Holy Spirit:

1Th. 1:5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

The final element required for unction to occur is a person, for the message came “with (the) Holy Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι αγίῳ). The Holy Spirit provides the certainty of the message. He enables the speaker to demonstrate the message as well as proclaim it. He opens the ears of the listener to understand and respond to the gospel. He is the person of the Godhead who authenticates the spoken message. The Holy Spirit mysteriously directs each of these components (the word of God, power, deep conviction, passion and lifestyle) in a particular setting.

My final thought to you today is this: **How do we know we are continuing to walk in the Spirit if we are not praying?** In the letter to the Ephesians Paul compares preaching to a violent battle. All Christians wage war “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). However, according to the context, the primary purpose of the armor is proclamation.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should (Ephesians 6:18-20).

He identifies the equipment the Christian has for this battle (Eph. 6:14-17) and then turns his focus to prayer. In this context, prayer is not another piece of armor or a weapon. Rather, it brings something that no artillery can. Objectively, Paul asks for right “words” (λόγος) to communicate the gospel. Here, Paul is asking for divine utterance to share the gospel. Subjectively, Paul asks for courage and strength to boldly (παρρησία) proclaim the gospel. In both cases, the preacher’s source of verbal inspiration and strength is external. This boldness Paul sought came from God

through the prayers of His people. In essence, Paul was asking the people of God to pray for the effects of the Spirit as he preached. **John Wesley said that “no one is ever saved unless someone has prayed.”**

“The Christian must never doubt,” Spurgeon boldly asserted, **“that the prayer in the Christian church is as precious as the utterance of the gospel.”** Spurgeon was once asked about the secret of his ministry. After a moment’s pause Mr. Spurgeon said, **“My people pray for me.”** For Spurgeon and many other historic preachers, **the secret prayer of the preacher and the concerts of prayer among the people conspire in the mercy of God to bring down the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.**