

Sharing Your Faith Tells God's Story

SCOTT HOEZEE

While I was growing up, my church got involved with different approaches to what we usually call evangelism. In the 1970s, the evangelism explosion method led someone like my father and another person from church to do cold calls: knocking on random front doors and flat out asking perfect strangers where their soul would go if they died that very night? This was not always warmly received. In the mid-1980s, my church participated in Alive 85. People were invited to large, Billy Graham-style rallies where the gospel would get proclaimed by a powerful preacher. We have all seen different approaches to sharing our faith, but today on *Groundwork*, we will wonder about different ways to consider evangelism, and who it is that leads us to do this. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now the second of four episodes in this four-part series on sharing our faith; and in the first episode, we looked at the ascension of Jesus. We also looked at the great commission at the very end of that episode, from Matthew 28, and some of the different facets of evangelism that the great commission revealed.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I can remember, Scott, there were many times when I was sharing my faith, I did learn this evangelism explosion method that you talked about earlier; and just remembering how much nervous tension I had in my hands, in my feet, just not knowing what to say, fumbling over my words; but then, I was reminded that the Holy Spirit is actually here with me, helping me to say what I need to say to testify to the truth; and that is something that really was reminded to the disciples when they heard the great commission call from Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One of the things we pointed out is that, yes, so, evangelism explosion...you dedicate a night or two a week and you do cold calls...knock on stranger's doors. That is a focused occasion for evangelism; but we said also that in Matthew 28, when Jesus says: Go, therefore, and make disciples, it carried with it the ring of *as* you are going; and so, one of the things we said, Darrell, in the previous episode is that this means we leave our house, we go to work, we go to Panera, we come back to work, we go to soccer games, we go out for dinner with somebody, we post stuff on Twitter or Instagram or Facebook; as you go—as you do all that stuff, Jesus says—you keep on witnessing. That is the everyday context for sharing our faith.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, I know that going to share our faith in the current context of where we are is one of the parts of the call. So, you go near, and you go far. I just got back from a mission trip with some college students to Mississippi, where we were helping people who had problems with tornadoes and repairing. So, I am not against missions that go away and go far and leave your hearth and home; but I know that we are called to not just go far, but we don't need to leapfrog over where we are to say we are doing missions. We can literally do that where we live. There are opportunities everywhere that God gives us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we talked in the first episode about how the Holy Spirit gets involved in all of this, and we want to keep focusing on that in this episode...a slightly different angle on it, though...and for that we are going to turn to the Gospel of John, and I think, as we have noted, Darrell, on previous *Groundwork* episodes, the longest single section in the whole Bible that is dedicated to teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit is in John's gospel, in those farewell discourses, as we call them. This is in the upper room on the night in which Jesus is betrayed, and there are huge teaching sections there, including on the Spirit. So, let's dig into a few verses here from John 14, where Jesus says, at verse 25: "All this I have spoken while still with you.²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, I love that part that you read, Scott, where it says the Holy Spirit will remind us of everything Jesus said and taught. I know that we need that. I need that and you need that. It is very important because we could, you know, mess it up if we don't have his power. We try to go on our own, we try to do what we think we need to do; but I love the fact that we have a promise that the Holy Spirit is going to help us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; we need more often to be reminded than instructed, Samuel Johnson once said, and we said in the previous episode, that the Holy Spirit also finally connected the dots correctly for the disciples, who still had some wrong ideas, even forty days after Easter when Jesus ascended. So, the Holy Spirit will remind us. Now, today people might say: Well, yes; they had to have that because they didn't have Bibles. I mean, these guys would write the New Testament eventually...they didn't have it. Now we got Bibles. Okay, but you know what? If you crack open the Bible without the Holy Spirit to remind you and teach you the content of that then they are just words; it could be any other book. We still need the Holy Spirit to remind us of what Jesus said, even when we are looking stuff up in the Bible.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true, Scott; and not only does the Holy Spirit remind us, but helps us to arrange it in a way that makes sense to people. So, he gives us the verses that we need at the right time. He gives us the context and the wisdom as to how to use them in a way that is winsome to people. We cannot just get that by picking up the scriptures and reading it to somebody: Okay, thou shalt not kill. Go do something with that. No; we need an understanding, and the Holy Spirit is the one who can connect the dots, like you said.

SCOTT HOEZEE

John 15, the next chapter, at verse 26: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth, who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is what witnesses do. They testify to something that they have seen, that they have heard, that they have experienced, and that is what we are being called to do; and Jesus is promising that the Advocate...the Holy Spirit...is going to give us the ability to do that accurately.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But then, Darrell, in John 16, the next chapter...so, we looked at 14, 15 and 16...Jesus says a couple more things.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, let's look at it. It starts in verse 7b: Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and

righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. ¹²I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, now we get a little more content, Darrell, on the work of the Spirit; specifically, what he will do. As the Bible commentator, Frederick Dale Bruner, said: Jesus says the Spirit in the world, and through us in the world, is going to do primarily three things: He is going to tell the world what is wrong; what is right; and who won. He is going to tell the world what is wrong: Sin, evil; we hurt each other; we sully the creation...bad; but we don't leave people with bad news, we move to the good news. Here is what is right: Follow Jesus; here is what makes for delight: Follow God's ways; and finally, who won? Jesus; Jesus won the victory. Jesus has pronounced judgment on sin and death. So, by the Spirit we witness to the world what is wrong, what is right, and who won; and we get all of it from the Spirit, Jesus says.

DARRELL DELANEY

It all comes down to the Holy Spirit reminding us of what to say, too, Scott; but we need to also talk about *how* he will direct us; and in a moment, we are going to think about that as we dig into the New Testament passage that will address this aspect. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Darrell, in this second episode of a four-part series on sharing our faith, we just said it all comes down to the Holy Spirit, and we focused in the previous segment of this episode on the content: what you say. Jesus says it is going to come from the Father through me by the Spirit. The Trinity is always united in what it does, so the content will come from the Spirit. He will lead you into all truth; but now, we want to think a little bit about *how* you do it.

DARRELL DELANEY

And this is where a lot of us get intimidated...a lot of us get kind of nervous. We read...in the Christian book section of any book store, there are a lot of how-to books there; but then, if we could look directly into scripture, there is a way for us to find out what we need to do and how we need to do it. So, let's look at that at 1 Peter 3, that starts at verse 13. It says:

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. 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, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this gets at the *how* of witness. What is our posture; what is our tone; what is our attitude? We want to talk about that in just a minute, Darrell, but first let's spend just a couple of moments reflecting. This is Peter...this is the disciple who was actually named Simon, and Jesus eventually gave him the nickname of Petros—the Rock—Rocky, if you want. So, Peter was the Rock, and he was a rock-solid guy and so forth, but the other thing we find out about Peter from all four of the gospels is that Peter was also the brash one; the one who rushed in where angels feared to tread. He could even be borderline rude sometimes, but he was always there with great passion and great zeal; and we see that again and again. There are lots of examples of it in the gospels.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Peter is always the one who keeps his feelings on his sleeve. You never have to guess or wonder what Peter is thinking. He is going to tell you; and sometimes he will say things that don't make much sense; but then, Peter is the first one to jump in; he is the initiator; he is kind of the spokesperson for the other twelve; so, you never have to guess. Sometimes his words are really sharp, sometimes they are really brash, but it is exactly where he is, and he is authentic in how he expresses himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly. Jesus says he has to suffer and die, Peter pulls him aside and says: Nope, nope, nope; you cannot do that! Get behind me, Satan! So, that wasn't such a good idea. Peter is the one who literally was the first to jump in. Jesus walks on water...twelve disciples in the boat...Peter is the only one who says: Me too! So, he jumps up out of the boat, walks on water, but only briefly. Peter is the one who pulled the sword in Gethsemane and lopped off the ear of one of the people there who came to arrest Jesus. Always, always, always so confident...until, he denies Jesus three times.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Peter the Rock ends up with feet of clay on that occasion; and it seems to have chastised him. Now, he is speaking a little bit of a different tone in those verses you just read, Darrell, from 1 Peter 3.

DARRELL DELANEY

We see a different Peter here; we see a more mature Peter; we see a learned Peter who has understood, through trials, that there is a way to witness into his faith. He is not the brash guy anymore. He is not the one cutting ears off anymore. He says that when you are persecuted, you share your faith, and defend the hope that is within you, you do it with gentleness, and do it politely with respect. Now, this thing is something that we haven't seen Peter in his young days act with that kind of character. So, he has actually learned something, and it is really powerful to see how he is saying this is the way you need to do it now, you need to do it in a gentle way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the theologian, Richard Mouw, who was a longtime president of Fuller Theological Seminary has written a lot about this. This is what he called *convicted civility*. We are right to be passionate about Jesus; we are right to be passionate about the gospel; we are right to be passionate about the truth and wanting to get the truth across to people; but you do it politely, as you just said, Darrell—gentleness and respect; and why is that so important? Well, because the message and the messenger should match, and if Jesus is the center of the message, and if Jesus is the gentle, lowly, and humble one, then if we come across as brash and rude and angry in our witness, we don't look like Jesus anymore; so, who can believe the content...the *what* of our evangelism...if the *how* betrays Jesus and his character?

DARRELL DELANEY

I have noticed that sometimes we have allowed the world to influence how we do that, because a salesman's mentality has come in. You have got to be an aggressor; you've got to close the deal; you've got to make it happen; but I have also seen in scripture where Jesus never interrupted anyone. Isn't it interesting how even if they are blatantly wrong, he will wait until they finish their thought, and then he will say: Hey, you are wrong about that. He doesn't cut people off, he doesn't interrupt anyone; and this is the gentleness and the polite respect that we are supposed to show as believers; because it actually adds value to our message that we are testifying about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you just said, Darrell, that sometimes we let the ways of the world influence us too much, and certainly we see that in recent years. It started a little bit with e-mail, where when you were writing somebody a message in the moment, it would arrive quicker, even, than a letter, you would say things in an e-mail you would never say if you were actually sitting across the table having a cup of coffee with this person...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And sometimes we regret the e-mails we send, but it has gotten worse than just e-mail with the arrival of Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and Tik Tok and some of these social media platforms, where people are...I've seen it, you've seen it...I probably have been guilty of it myself. People are just downright rude, they are hostile, they call names, they throw people under the bus in ways that, again, in person, most of them...though maybe not all...would never do. We are influenced by this, and I think it does leak into how the Church witnesses. There are a lot of angry sermons; there are a lot of angry people, you know, confronting other people, even about the faith.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is really disappointing at some point because I know I have been guilty of that as well; but I mean, the fruit of the Spirit is kindness, goodness, gentleness, you know, and those are the things we need to exercise; even though we are passionate about what we are saying, there is a modicum of respect that I should give to you and you should give to me that would actually be helpful to the witness; but as we prepare, Scott, to wrap up this episode, we need to consider one more facet of sharing our faith, and we are going to do that in just a moment.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are going to wrap up now this second program of four on various aspects of sharing our faith; and Darrell, let's just dig right back into scripture to get some familiar words from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5.

DARRELL DELANEY

Starting at verse 13, it reads: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

SCOTT HOEZEE

Familiar words that remind us of another familiar phrase from St. Francis of Assisi: Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words. A bit of an exaggeration there, Darrell. Obviously, we need words; but what St. Francis is saying, and what Jesus is saying, is that our walk and our talk had better match; and we want to be...as we just said from 1 Peter 3, with convicted civility...we want our witness itself to be transparent; not only to what Jesus said, but how Jesus himself would say it, which would be humbly and

gently; and so, that is what is being said here; and what is interesting, everybody knows this, you know, “you are the world” image from what you just read from Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount, but often what we take away from that is to say: Oh, *I* am the light...*I* am the light; but that is not really Jesus’ main focus. His main focus is let the light shine so people can see what you *do*. They need to be able to see your good deeds in the full light of day; and those deeds had better look like Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, I love what you said there, Scott. Basically, our testimony is upheld by our integrity; and if we are walking the way we walk and we talk the way we talk and we live the way we live, if they are matching, then our testimony is that much more powerful. We have often heard people say: It’s not what you said, it’s how you said it. And if we make sure that we do it in a way that Christ did it, it will be awesome to see what God does with that; but also, when you turn a light on, you don’t look into the light. You actually look to where the light is shining, so that wherever it is illuminated, that is what you are supposed to see. So, when our lights are shining, it is not about us shining, it is about what we are pointing to, and what we are showing people about our Father, who gives us the ability to turn our lights on in the first place.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They say sunshine is the best disinfectant, right? When you do your deeds in the light of day, all can see them and hopefully they are deeds that you can be proud of; and again, in our case, in sharing our faith, deeds that point to Jesus. We are not supposed to be showboats...we are not showing off...we are not just calling attention to ourselves. We are just living our lives, and hopefully when we live our lives, in the light that shines from the gospel, the walk and the talk match; and they need to, Darrell, because there is nothing that undercuts sharing our faith and the witness of the gospel faster than hypocrisy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When the Church is clearly guilty of hypocrisy, it is game over for a lot of people.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Lord forgive us for that because there have been a couple of times when we dropped the ball on this witnessing thing; and we don’t understand that it is not about us drawing attention to ourselves...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is about us doing the best we can to make sure that everything we do points back to God; and if we are not displaying the character that God taught us to display, then we undercut our very words. So, the words become empty.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A hypocrite in ancient Greek was kind of the word for an actor, because Greeks would wear masks, because no women were allowed to be actors. So, men would play women, and they would wear a female-looking mask. So, a hypocrite was somebody who wore a false front...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And when we get caught wearing a false front today as disciples...as witnesses...again, our words, as you just said, Darrell, become empty...vain; and a lot of the world is just waiting to see that to pounce; to say:

Ah, ha, ha! You see those Christians there? They think they are so superior, but they are no different; but we are supposed to be...as Paul writes in the New Testament...we are supposed to be a new creation after we get baptized. You are a new creation. You are supposed to be kind of like a preview of coming attractions for the kingdom of God and for the new creation that will come after Jesus comes again; and so hopefully, how we treat our neighbors, how we treat the clerk at the grocery store, or the bagger, or the server at the restaurant, or the flight attendant; or how we raise our children; how we spend our money; it all should be previews of the patterns of the new creation.

DARRELL DELANEY

The patterns of the new creation and the inauguration of the kingdom that Jesus said is here. In the kingdom, there are no interruptions, there is no stepping over people, there is no hey, look at me. There is a humble servant attitude that says I am considering your interests as well as my own, and I am putting your life before mine; I am laying my life down. That is the attitude we are supposed to have in the new humanity, but we also know that we are not saved by those deeds or those works at all; and many of us remember these special words from Ephesians 2, verses 8-10. It says:

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this is the balance beam of the Christian life that we have talked about, Darrell, on lots of different *Groundwork* episodes. We are not saved by what we do, but once we are saved, what we do changes, and matters, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in one sense, before salvation, pay no attention to your deeds; after salvation, pay very close attention to your deeds because they are supposed to come out of grace; and therefore, you are saved by grace, so now you are supposed to be gracious, right? And you have been saved by the big capital G...Grace...let your life drip with little, small g gracelets. It is the same word for *charism*...the gifts, the abilities, the charismatic presence of the Spirit...that is exactly what you need to do, because again, when those things don't work together, sharing our faith becomes a dead letter; we are dead in the water. When they go together, by itself that may not convince people, but we have a much, much better chance to convince people that Jesus loves them and they should love Jesus if we show that we love them. Even if they haven't believed yet, or even if they are cynical or they are kind of resisting our message. If we can show: Hey, I love you anyway, and I am going to love you no matter what you make of my witness here. That is going to soften hearts.

DARRELL DELANEY

What we need is to make sure that our integrity and character will uphold the testimony; and that comes out of gratitude for what you remember Christ has done for you and the grace he has shown; and so, you get to actually share that good message with everybody; and so, we continue to encourage one another in good deeds, and it is really powerful to see God doing that work in our lives when we can share with people.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly, because when that happens, then the Holy Spirit...who we talked about earlier in this episode and the previous episode...the Spirit rushes in and brings vibrant faith to more and more people; and that is a wonderful prospect for all of us who participate in sharing our faith in word and deed, thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we study Pentecost, another significant event in the early Christian Church that helps us

better understand how God helps us, even as he calls us to share our faith.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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