

WELLSPRING

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sermon Series Devotional

8/15/2021-9/5/2021



You've heard it said..

Unpacking Myths About Outreach

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” -Romans 10:14-15

“Go out into all the world and make disciples” is one of Jesus’ last commandments. It’s called The Great Commission. And yet, a recent study reveals that more than fifty percent of Christians don’t know what the great commission is, when asked. Evangelism is just as misunderstood. And for many, it has a very negative connotation. But it is clearly an important aspect of being a Christian. So we are going to reclaim the original intent of the great commission and evangelism/outreach.

Suggested Use

Our devotional is designed to be a resource for you and can be used in a variety of ways. Each week, you will be provided a series of questions, reflections, and prompts to engage with. You can complete them all in one setting or divide them up throughout the week. Whether you are using it in a group or for your own personal time, we suggest keeping a journal that can be used to respond to the questions each week and for prayers.

Week One - “Rinse, Repeat?”

Let's start where we've been. We are going to do some reflection on our previous understandings of what evangelism has meant. This study is going to be different than many we've done because we are going to ask you to do some personal reflection, not just study. Fewer questions doesn't mean we feel the topic is less important but actually, we want you to live with the questions and allow God to form a new vision in your heart for evangelism.

Reflection questions:

1. Before we start this series, we are going to ask you to list here three people you feel God is asking you to pray for. This may take you a few days to come up with the names, that is ok. Take your time and listen to God's guidance.
2. What was your earliest understanding of the word “evangelism,” if any?
3. How has your understanding of evangelism changed over time?
4. Have you ever had negative experiences with someone who has tried to “evangelize” you?
5. Have you ever had any positive experiences with someone evangelizing to you?

Read Matthew 28:19-20

1. What is Jesus' command here?
2. If “go into all the world” is accurately translated “as you go about,” how does that change your understanding of his commandment?
3. What do you think “making disciples” means?
4. What is our part in the disciple making and what part is God's? See Philippeans 1:6 for some insight.
5. Was this an instruction for just the disciples or for all believers?

Week Two - What's Your Story?

There's something really powerful in discovering what our faith journey has been. This week we are going to focus on a simple exercise to map your faith journey thus far. Seeing how our journey has progressed so far can give us great insight into our relationship with God.

Chart your faith journey

1. Spend some time thinking about your faith journey, the highs and lows of your relationship with God. On a separate sheet of paper, create a chart of that journey, identifying and labeling the high and low moments of your life. Your graph may look something like this sample. These will be specific to you so there will be differences. That is good. There are no wrong answers.



2. As you mark moments, make some notes about what it was that happened so you can go back to review and answer later questions.
3. Circle the places on the graph that you felt closest to God in your journey. What kind of pattern do you see? Did you have several low moments or high moments in a row? Did you have seasons? What else do you notice as you look at your graph?
4. This graph is considered your faith story. How does it make you feel? What did you learn? Was anything a surprise? Was anything expected?

Read Acts 22:3-22

1. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and asked if he could speak to the people. This is what he said to the crowd. What do you notice about his speech? What was the crux of his speech?
2. As you look back at your faith journey, do you have a moment in which your relationship with God changed? If so, when was it? If not, how would you describe your relationship with God? Some of us have been raised in the church and don't feel we had a big moment, but many smaller moments that together tell a story.
3. Have you ever had the opportunity to tell someone your story or part of your story? How did it make you feel? How was it received?
4. Do you think telling your story is different from evangelizing? What makes it different?

Week Three - Filling Seats or Transforming Hearts?

Somewhere in the life of the church, we have equated marketing and inviting people to church with evangelizing, or sharing our faith story. It may be that we are uncomfortable feeling the responsibility of converting hearts. We are going to talk today about what is God's responsibility and what is ours.

Read 2 Cor 5:17

1. Who is doing the work in this passage?
2. What do you think the new creation looks like?
3. Have you ever felt a part of that?

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27

1. Who is doing the work?
2. What do you think a new heart means?
3. What does a heart of stone represent to you? Have you ever felt like your heart has been hardened like stone?

Read Romans 12:2

1. Who is doing the work here?
2. What does it mean to have a mind renewed? Why do you think Paul says mind and not heart or soul?

Read Philippians 1:6

1. What is the 'good work' in you?
2. Who does the good work? How do you think this is accomplished?
3. What does this say about us needing to feel "finished" before the end of our journey?

Reflection questions:

1. After going through 3 weeks of study on evangelism, how has your view of evangelism changed?
2. Do you feel qualified to evangelize and simply share your story with other people? What would help you feel more comfortable?
3. Does it make you feel less anxious knowing you don't have to have all the answers?
4. What do you see as the difference between evangelism and inviting people to church? Are both important?

Week Four - Who's Got the Problem?

Many of the evangelism efforts in Christianity's past have presumed that other people have a serious problem and we were the ones who had a cure.

Read Acts 17:16-33

1. What religious situation did Paul find in Athens?
2. What choice did he have to make in his approach toward them?
3. What approach did he use?
4. How did this approach show respect to God's work in them already?

Read Matthew 15:21-28

1. What is your first impression about the interaction between the woman and Jesus?
2. Are you surprised at Jesus' responses? Why do you think he responded the way he did?
3. How big of a leap was this non-Jewish woman making in order to ask something of Jesus?
4. After Jesus grants her request, he also says, "Great is your faith." (One of only 2 times in scripture.) Why do you think he said that?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

1. What does it mean to "not regard people from a worldly point of view?" How should we think of people?
2. Does this mean seeing them the same way that God does? If so, how does God see people?
3. If this is true, how does this destroy all the categories we try to put people in?

Reflection questions:

1. Go back and look at your faith journey. Do you feel you have missed anything? Feel free to add any experiences you have remembered since first creating the graph.
2. Do you still see the lows and lows and highs as highs?
3. Do you see any thread of God's work in your life?
4. Can you put names of people that God used in your journey?
5. How did you experience praying for the people you chose to pray for 4 weeks ago?