

Grace Works

God's Grace Transforms Our Fears

Ever feel afraid to share your faith in Christ?

Introduction - Boris Kornfeld

Three Women (Mark 16:1-8)

Mary Magdalene, Mary Mother of James, Salome

Going to _____ (v.1)

Experience Four Miracles

Stone Is _____ (v.4)

Angel Is _____ (v.5)

Jesus Was _____ (v.6)

Told To _____ (v.7)

And they said nothing to anyone, because they were _____. (16:8)

Hall of Fear

Paul

1 Corinthians 2:3; Ephesians 6:19; Acts 20:24

John Chrysostom

Billy Graham

You and Me

Three Women (Luke 24:8-27)

_____ God ... (v. 8)

... Received _____

... Compelled to _____ (vs. 9-10)

Conclusion - Boris Kornfeld

My Response Today:

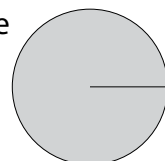
Remember God, Receive Grace.

Jot down the names of three people that I pray would come to Christ.

Grace Works – Right Here! God’s Grace Transforms Our Fears

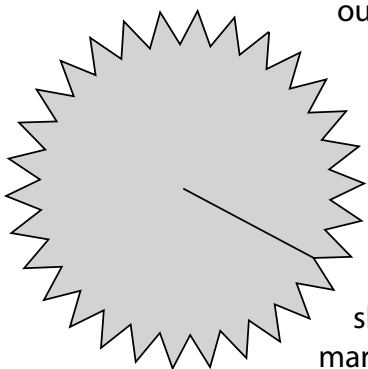
Before school recently my son Noah and I looked at the idea of *radius* in his seventh grade math textbook. Most of us remember that, for a circle, radius is a straight line extending from the center to the circumference. The longer the radius, the bigger the circle. You and I have a *radius of devotion*. It is the length which our devotion to God carries us into mission by serving and evangelizing. If you are like me, at times your sense of devotion may be quite personal, affecting just you, or perhaps your immediate family. Your circle of influence is a small circle. At other times, our passion for God and our desire to make a difference for people at their points of need extend our radius; we serve in practical ways as the hands and feet of Jesus. Our circle of influence grows. But at other times, our fear of evangelism – our reluctance to share our devotion verbally -- shrinks our radius of devotion. The circle of our lives can have a fairly jagged edge.

I tend to have my devotional time, and often read the Emmaus Road, sitting at our kitchen table in the morning. My Bible, my cereal bowl and God. That spot is the center of my devotional life. But sometimes I wonder how far my radius of devotion extends. Will it extend 100 feet -- from my breakfast table to my unchurched neighbor’s driveway when I talk to him this afternoon? Many of us have a sense of devotion to Jesus about our work. Yet how far does our radius of devotion emanate, influencing our colleagues and customers? Sometimes our radius of devotion is limited by fear. Let’s examine fears that can limit that radius of our devotion and then explore how God’s grace can transform our fears. May your radius of devotion grow and grow this week!



Monday - I’ll Be Embarrassed

It’s been said that everyone gets embarrassed except babies. Embarrassment is learned as we identify with social groups and their norms. We are all social creatures and no one likes the pain of violating a social norm. Yet you and I risk embarrassment everyday for things as minor as an ill-timed comment or wearing clothes just out of fashion. We are citizens of earth, residents of Elk Grove and members of many social groups. Yet our most important identity is as children of God, subjects in his Kingdom and citizens of heaven sojourning on earth. Read Joshua 1:1-9. Joshua was a child of God. Faced with crisis God spoke to him, “Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous ...” The next time you feel afraid of sharing your faith, remember God’s promise to Joshua and how he honored Joshua’s faith. Confess any fear of embarrassment to the Lord and ask him to increase your confidence to share the benefits of membership in his Kingdom. Take a moment to pray for the first person on your prayer book-mark, that he or she would come to faith in Christ.



Tuesday - I Might Damage an Important Relationship

Family - we’ve all got one. Our greatest moments and some of our most difficult ones occur in our families. After the work of getting together for a special holiday, we can fear damaging important family relationships by sharing our faith. Yet a family member that does not know Christ is already at a serious deficit. God places us in families, in part, so we can demonstrate the difference that he makes in our lives. We do that as the fruit of the Spirit characterizes our lives (read Galatians 5:22-23). A friend recently explained this fruit as the ‘personality of Christ’ coming through every believer. How would your family members feel about having more of these qualities at your next family gathering? They can, through you. Praise God that he is at work in you, by his Spirit, to produce in you just such fruit, just such Christ-like ‘personality’.

God also leaves us in our families to proclaim the gospel that our family members might know God and be saved. Consider these examples. Noah was told to build an ark – no one had ever done that before – and God used it to save Noah’s family and re-start the human race (Genesis 6-8). A man with a demon – even chains and shackles couldn’t contain him - was so grateful for Jesus’ healing that he begged to just stay with him.

Yet Jesus commanded the man to go home to his friends and tell them what he had done for him. When he did, "everyone marveled" (Mark 5:1-20). Lydia was a business woman in Phillipi who heard of Jesus through Paul. The rest of Lydia's family heard about Jesus through her – such that they were all baptized together (Acts 16:11-15). You were born into your family for a purpose, not just to demonstrate the personality of Christ, but also to proclaim the message of Christ. Your confidence in Christ will be attractive for loved ones looking for answers they can count on. Ask God today to use your life and your words to win one of your family members to Christ.

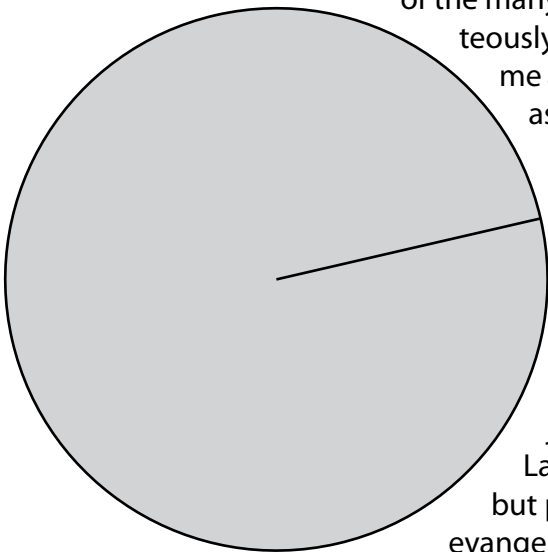
Wednesday - I Might Not Know What to Say

Your radius of devotion may be limited by the following concern: "Our faith in Christ touches all of life. What if someone asks me a question that I can't answer? Sometimes I think that I could even turn a genuine seeker away from God if I respond poorly."

This sentiment has a basis – our faith in Christ, and his claims - do touch all matters of life. Yet it risks overlooking God's role. God is the only one who brings people to himself – even through our imperfect sharing. None of us will 'know it all' or be adequate ambassadors for our Holy God. However, each of us can share our experience with God and what we have learned by walking with him. Truth be told, we are commanded to do so. Read 1 Peter 3:15. "Through thick and thin... in adoration before Christ... be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy." (The Message)

Your story with God counts. Be sincere. Tell your God-story. God tends to teach us to the degree that we use what he's already given us. Put what you do know to work by sharing it with someone else and God will teach you more. If you find questions that you cannot answer, make them your own. Study scripture, avail yourself

of the many good evangelistic resources offered today, and then respond courteously to those who ask. If you'd like more evangelistic resources, contact me at dzahnd@fbceg.org. Thank God today for your story with him – and ask God for an opportunity to share that story with someone new this week.



Thursday - I Am Just Not Called to Share the Gospel

Years ago I was at a mission base in Belize that could only be reached by boat. The boat had to be pulled by hand across a cable spanning a rushing river. Late at night, someone called for the boat. Three men heard the call. One shrugged and said, "Serving is just not my gift." It was a surprising thing to hear at a mission base! Later it occurred to me that serving may be a gift in which some excel but primarily it is a calling for all Christians to follow. The same is true for evangelism.

You and I can think of gifted evangelists. But scripturally all Christians are called to share their faith. Read Luke 24:46-48 and Acts 1:8. Jesus commanded his disciples to be his witnesses. In a legal and historical sense, you and I are to testify for Christ. You have the Spirit of God and the Word of God in your life, in part, so you'll have the power to witness. Witnessing for Christ and his coming kingdom is a vocation of the whole church – not just a vocation for some Christians. Would you embrace your calling as a witness for Christ today? Just as there is nowhere you can go beyond his care and love for you (Psalm 139:7-12), there is nowhere you go that you cannot witness to his care and love for others. Pray for the second person on your prayer bookmark today, that he or she would come to Christ.

Friday - What If The Person Actually Accepts Christ – Then What?!

Then praise the Lord! That would be great news - this is what we pray for! And then help that person begin to grow. Often new believers are unusually open to spiritual direction, yet we sometimes mistake their 'decision' for a destination. Jesus did not call us to make 'decisions' but disciples (Matthew 28:19). That Greek word, *matheteuo*, is derived from the verb 'to learn' (*manthano*). At conversion a person is saved – and enrolled as a lifelong student of the Master Teacher Jesus. You and I have a clearly unique opportunity to help such a person get started. If someone accepts Christ with you, plan another meeting with him. Ask her to share her faith with three people. Get him connected to the Word of God (Bible), the Spirit of God (prayer) and the people of God (fellowship). These are tender, precious days. Pray for the next person on your prayer list, that you would be the person to help her get started as a 'student' of Jesus Christ.

Years ago, in very difficult times, the prophet Habakkuk wrote, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). We are not there yet, but we are on the way. My heart and yours are filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. And that is no small miracle. In the days and weeks to come may your *radius of devotion* and mine continue to grow and grow -- until the earth is filled with his glory "as the waters covers the sea."