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ONE GREAT TASK



*When have you been entrusted
with an important task?*

QUESTION #1

#BSFLtruth

THE POINT

Each of us must share the gospel.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

"I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent." President Dwight D. Eisenhower spoke these words in 1954 to a gathering of church leaders.¹ It's interesting to hear those words coming from a man who had to make major decisions every day.

When you think about it, though, few things truly fall into both categories.

- ▶ Exercise is important, but not urgent.
- ▶ An email message can be extremely urgent, but not necessarily important.

Of course, some things really are both urgent and important. One example is a medical emergency. Another example is the task given to every disciple of Jesus: sharing the good news of Christ with others. People have no more important decision to make than to choose Christ, and now is the time for us to point them to Christ and help them understand everything at stake.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

What Paul described in these verses is the process of discipleship, which involves knowing and walking in the truths of Jesus and leading others to do the same. To disciple someone, then, begins with helping them to know and embrace the good news of Jesus Christ. All of this is reflected in the Great Commission Jesus gave His disciples at the end of His earthly ministry: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Paul had invested much time and effort in teaching and discipling Timothy. Now, he encouraged Timothy to pay it forward, investing in others who would likewise “teach others.” Paul told Timothy to invest his life in men who had proven their love for the Lord. Once these men were faithfully trained, they in turn were obligated to invest in others. This is God’s method of multiplication. Each disciple is entrusted with the gospel and has a responsibility to share it with others.

Joseph Brucato is a great example of what goes wrong when we don’t take discipleship seriously. Brucato was a mailman in Brooklyn, New York. One day, his supervisor happened to walk past the mailman’s personal car and saw it was full of mail. The supervisor confronted him, and Brucato admitted he sometimes didn’t deliver all the mail. He blamed alcohol and depression. When postal inspectors went to his apartment, they found 40,000 pieces of undelivered mail—some 2,500 pounds!²

Who has been faithful in teaching you the truth about God and the gospel?

QUESTION #2

The missing mail included several personal messages—many of which were both important and urgent. But because the mail was never delivered, people were robbed of what they needed to hear.

Sadly, many Christians do something far more outrageous than hoarding mail: they hoard the good news of Christ.

Paul's challenge to Timothy echoes the Great Commission. In the same way Paul shared Christ with Timothy and discipled him, Timothy could share Christ and disciple others. And because someone shared Christ with us, we can do the same for others. In fact, we must do the same for others.

2 Timothy 2:3-7

³ Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Sharing the good news of Christ isn't always easy. In fact, sometimes it's downright hard—perhaps even dangerous. We are to persevere, however, even if doing so brings challenges.

Paul gave Timothy three examples of people who persevere:

- ▶ **The soldier.** A soldier's one duty is to obey his commanding officer. And, like good soldiers, we are to persevere in our obedience to Christ. Our primary goal is to please Him, even when it requires us to go on the front lines of spiritual warfare.
- ▶ **The athlete.** Paul likely was familiar with the Olympic games.

What can we learn from Paul's word pictures in these verses?

QUESTION #3

THE 3-1-5-1 STRATEGY

You have been following an evangelism tool called "the 3-1-5-1 Strategy" in the activities and Live It Out challenges throughout this study. Use the following steps to create a plan for continuing this strategy in the weeks to come.

List **three** people you are praying will accept the gift of salvation:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Record **one** sentence that summarizes the gospel message:

List **five** people you will invite to be part of this group:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Commit to sharing the gospel with **one** person this week:

"There is no joy in all the world like that of
bringing one soul to Christ."

—WILLIAM BARCLAY

In his day, athletes trained in the presence of the judges during the month before the games. If an athlete violated the rules, the judges imposed corporal punishment or heavy fines. To be victorious, the athlete needed diligence, self-control, and discipline.

- ▶ **The farmer.** A hardworking farmer should get to enjoy the compensation of his produce. But he has to persevere in working his crops for months before he sees the fruit of his labor. The faithful witness also may get to enjoy the fruits of his or her labor by seeing people come to faith in Christ.

Sharing Christ isn't easy. It takes focus, discipline, and hard work—but the payoffs make it all worth it.

Let me tell you about Azzam, a Christian in Somalia who has a passion for sharing the gospel and God's Word. Unfortunately, he must smuggle Bibles into his country, and the only way he's been able to do this is in coffins. Azzam will actually climb into a coffin and lie underneath a deceased body. He travels this way to Kenya, where he gets Bibles. Then he finds another coffin headed to Somalia and travels back home with the Bibles. Azzam said: "I love the irony that caskets for dead people are used by God to bring new life in Somalia! Many are being transformed into the likeness of our Savior."³

Azzam is an inspiring example of what Paul was teaching: that we are to be disciplined, do whatever it takes, and endure suffering when necessary in order to advance the cause of Christ.



What excuses do we make for not sharing Christ?

QUESTION #4

2 Timothy 2:8-10

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Jesus is the ultimate example of perseverance in the face of suffering.

- ▶ **Jesus is the greatest example of a soldier.** He was obedient even to death for us. He fought the ultimate battle for us—and won (see Phil. 2:8-9).
- ▶ **Jesus is the greatest example of an athlete.** He endured until He was victorious over sin and death and gained the prize—our salvation (see Heb. 12:2).
- ▶ **Jesus is the greatest example of a farmer.** He alone has the power to break apart the hardened soil in a person's life to bear spiritual fruit (see Matt. 13:1-23).

Paul also knew about persevering for the sake of sharing Christ. While he was writing his letter to Timothy, he was in chains in a Roman prison. Worse, he knew he soon would be put to death by his captors (see 2 Tim. 4:6). Amazingly, even in chains, Paul declared that "God's word is not chained." Paul knew he might die, but the gospel never would. In fact, the gospel of Jesus Christ had become Paul's very life; he called it "my gospel."

How do you want to spend your life? Will you persevere for the gospel, or will you wander away from your task when the going gets tough? The choice is yours.

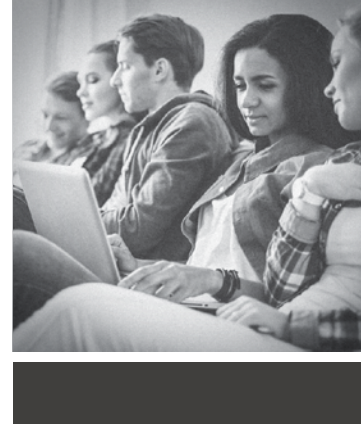
What steps can our group take this month to share the gospel?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do to share the good news of Jesus?

- ▶ **Pray.** If you've never told someone about Christ, begin with prayer. Pray that God will bless you with boldness and wisdom. Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with someone whom God has prepared.
- ▶ **Learn.** Seek out new information and new strategies for sharing the truth of Christ with others. If possible, begin by enrolling in an evangelism class at your church, or by connecting with someone who can mentor you.
- ▶ **Join.** Join a group in your church that regularly engages in evangelistic outreach or goes on mission trips for the purpose of sharing the gospel.



Sharing the gospel is a massively important endeavor because eternity is at stake. Sharing the gospel is also incredibly urgent, since none of us are guaranteed tomorrow. Let these two truths frame every decision you make in the days and weeks to come.

My thoughts

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Address at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, Illinois, [online] 19 August 1954 [cited 29 October 2015]. Available from the Internet: presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9991.
2. <http://nypost.com/2014/09/26/postal-carrier-hoarded-40k-pieces-of-undelivered-mail>.
3. Tom Doyle and Greg Webster, *Killing Christians* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2015), 16.

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLtruth**



A LIFE CHANGED

BY GREG LAURIE

I was born in the 1950s. What a time to be alive! It all began so innocently. James Dean was a movie star and so was Marilyn Monroe. Ike was president, and Elvis was king. For 25 cents, you could get a burger complete with the trimmings.

I remember watching “Leave It to Beaver” on a black-and-white television, but life at our house was not like it was at the Beav’s. I came from a broken home and was often carted off to different parts of the country on short notice.

I got used to the term “new kid” and was lonely much of the time. I had an artistic streak, and I often retreated into my private world of cartooning. I had no father. I was born out of wedlock, and there was quite a lineup of different men my mother married in her quest to find meaning in life. I was raised in an adult world that was disillusioning. I quickly tired of the alcoholic haze that hovered over my home life. At an early age, I determined that there must be more to life than what I had seen so far.

I grew up too soon—even in the age of innocence known as the '50s. But that age came to a quick and brutal end like many icons of the era: James Dean in a head-on car crash, Marilyn Monroe by overdosing on barbiturates, and John and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. by assassins.

I had also seen the devastating effects of drugs on the lives of some '60s cult heroes who self-destructed in their prime: Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison—all gone. Add to that the ominous cloud of the Vietnam War that hung over the heads of the nation's young men, including me. Every one of us who were draft age lived with the uncertainty that any minute we could be heading for Vietnam. Then there was Watergate. We watched the highest office in our country unravel and saw a President fall.

Now it was the '60s, and kids my age were trying to get a handle on all these dreams going up in smoke. Like millions of other teens, I thought I could—we could—change the world. “Never trust anyone over 30,” now a cliché to describe the mindset of the generation, rang true for me.

Like so many others, I bought into the idea that drugs might contain some of the answers I was looking for. It seemed that everyone was doing drugs. I followed along at first, believing that the answers to the questions would eventually come. However, it wasn't long before I saw the futility of this lifestyle as I watched my creativity, motivation, and skills diminish. I was told drugs would make me more aware, and in many ways, that was true. I became more aware of how empty and lonely I was. After a particularly frightening drug-induced experience, I knew I had to stop doing drugs forever.



All these converging issues caused fear and disillusionment. I found myself asking the big questions: *What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? What will happen after I die?*

One day, on my high school campus, I was watching a group of about 30 Christians sitting on the front lawn. They were singing songs about God. I determined to study the group, but from a distance. After all, I couldn't sit close enough for any of my friends to think I was one of the Jesus freaks. That would have been social suicide in high school.

“Never before had I heard that faith in Christ was an either/or deal.”

I was touched by their sincerity, even though it struck me as odd that anyone my age would want to spend time singing about God. Then a young man stood up, opened a Bible, and began to speak. I don't remember much of what he said that day except for one statement based on Matthew 12:30: “Jesus said, ‘Whoever is not with me is against me.’”

That really struck me. Never before had I heard that faith in Christ was an either/or deal. I looked over at these Christians and thought, *Undoubtedly, they are for Him.* Knowing I was not one of them, it dawned on me that I must be against Him.

The preacher told the group that anyone who wanted to know Jesus in a personal way should get up and walk forward to pray with him. I thought, *If it truly is possible to know Jesus in a personal way, I would love that.* Immediately, the doubts came, but before I knew quite what was happening, I found myself standing with a handful of other brave souls, praying to receive Jesus Christ into my heart and life. I had the distinct sensation that a tremendous weight had been lifted off my shoulders. In no uncertain terms, I knew my life had changed dramatically.

Not long after, I found myself teaching Bible studies—of all things. It is ironic considering I was not the best student, to say the least. But I had never read a book like the Bible before, and it came alive to me; I wanted to share it with others. Since then I have pastored a church for more than 40 years and preached in evangelistic events such as Harvest America. I love to share the gospel and tell others how God can change lives!



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