

THE CASE FOR CHRIST SERMON

Matthew 5

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Sermon: Explaining the Good News of Christ

Welcome to this, the final week of our series on The Case for Christ. This is the last week of our series but in many ways it won't end at all—because our whole ministry as a church is Living to Love People to Christ. Let me begin with a message from the Sermon on the Mount, given by Jesus. And this is what he said in Matthew 5: “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” (verse 13). What did Jesus mean in this passage? I think he was saying, “If you're a follower of mine, I want you to live lives that are salty. Lives that make people thirst for God. I want you to live lives that shine my light and grace and love and hope and compassion into dark places.”

In The Case for Christ movie, a woman named Alfie makes herself available to the unexpected adventure God has for her. Let's watch a clip from the movie to see how that all got started with the Strobels. [Play Video 4: Explaining the Good News of Christ]

Do you see how God took Alfie's availability and used her to impact the lives of others? It was not just by coincidence. But being aware to be a servant and be used by God. God wants to use you in a similar way! He wants to speak through each of us to impact the lives of the friends and family members all around us—for all of eternity! By faith —Believe. The first thing we need to do—and that we can help others do—is to understand and by faith we embrace the truth about who Jesus is, and the fact that he came to earth and died on the cross for the express purpose of giving “his life as a ransom for our sins” (Mark 10:45) so that we could be forgiven and adopted into his family. When we recognize our spiritual poverty / when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst after righteousness/ when he makes us pure in heart by His sacrifice on the cross /we respond seek to worship and live as a child of God. ...

Be faith we Receive His Grace and confess it—Like Peter, Thomas and Luther did when he confessed Jesus as their Lord and Savior. By the Holy Spirit we become a child of God to live what I call walking wet. By faith We walk as baptized members of the family of God to Live Jesus.

It's when our prayer life takes on a whole new dimension because we are praying to God for help and listening for his direction.

It's when our Bible study takes on new relevance because we aren't just looking for abstract ideas; we're looking for ways to help our friends know Christ.

It's when our worship is heartfelt because we are worshiping the God of the second chance who loves our friends even more than we do.

It's when our dependence on God is at its greatest because we know that, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing we can do by ourselves to bring anybody to faith.

Today we are going to look what it means to walk as a child of the God and be salt and light in our world by asking, “What if Jesus lived in my house? What would he do? How would he interact with the neighbors?”

1. The first lesson = before Jesus would talk to his neighbors about the Heavenly Father, he would talk to his Heavenly Father about his neighbors.

Before Jesus embarked on anything important, he brought it to the Father in prayer. In fact, Jesus' prayers for spiritually lost people continued up to his last breath on the cross. If Jesus lived in my house, he would pray specifically, consistently, and fervently for his neighbors. Are we doing that? Some have prayed for a wayward son or daughter, a spiritually confused parent or a best friend or relative for years. All through the years you haven't seen any evidence whatsoever of a spiritual awakening in them. A thousand times, you've been tempted to stop praying for them. What's the use? Nothing is happening! Never give up. Never cease praying. Never stop lifting them up to the throne of grace. By faith we believe it does make a difference/

Keep praying. And today, as that person comes to mind, pray that God would give you the opportunity for an unexpected adventure—a chance to have a spiritual conversation in which you can explain the Good News of Christ. Here's a convicting question: If God were to answer every prayer you prayed last week, would there be anybody new in his kingdom?

2. If Jesus lived in my house, he would let the neighbors know the door is always open for questions. I think Jesus would say, "Do you have a doubt, objection, obstacle? Come on in. We'll talk about it."

If anyone should have known the identity of Jesus, it was John, who once pointed at Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

But then John got arrested and thrown into prison. What happens to us when tough times come? Doubt begins to creep in, right? And the same happened to John. So he asked a couple of his followers to go to Jesus and ask him directly, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3). Jesus said, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: In other words, "Go back and tell John about the evidence you see with your own eyes that convinces you I am who I claim to be."

Friends, it's okay for us to have questions and even doubts, The good news is we have answers to the toughest questions of faith and life. Truth is on our side! We should not be afraid of questions. We should not shut down the opinions of those whose beliefs differ from ours. Instead, by encouraging open discussion we allow opportunities for the truth of Christ to shine through us to others.

That's why we have bible study and small groups. Also, I want you to know that we're going to continue to offer ongoing opportunities for you to participate in small groups/classes that will study these important matters [give details].

We want you to invite spiritually curious friends and neighbors into a safe environment where we can engage with them, listen, empathize, validate them as people, respect them, be authentic, and accompany them on their journey toward Jesus.

3. If Jesus lived in my house, he would live out an authentic faith. Authentic faith is more than just words. When we sacrificially serve others as Jesus did, it opens up hearts otherwise closed to the gospel. Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." In this verse, the Greek word for good doesn't just refer to good as opposed to bad; it means winsome and attractive. Our authentic acts of service are attractive and can draw others toward Christ. We want them to see Jesus –(not Us)

Be open to God's unexpected adventures and the opportunities he arranges for us to explain the truth of Christ to others. Simply put, our role is this: to be ready and willing—because God is always able. After all, he is the great evangelist; we're merely the tools he uses to fulfill his mission of redeeming the world, one person at a time.