

Circle of Faith - Week 2: Reach Out

1. The Heavenly Mandate: Standing in the Gap as Intercessors

Last week, we allowed the Holy Spirit to cleanse our lips, burning away our fear, baggage, and feelings of inadequacy. When God asks, *"Whom shall I send?"* and we answer, *"Here I am, Lord! Send me,"* our very first step out the door leads us directly into a missional mindset.

Having a missional mindset isn't an oppressive burden or a chore reserved for specialized evangelists; it is a joyful, sacred command given to every follower of Jesus. But to truly understand what it means to "reach out," we have to realize that biblical outreach doesn't just move in one direction. It moves in three:

- **1. Reaching Upward (To Jesus):** We reach out to Jesus first for personal intimacy, to receive His heart, and to draw the strength and spiritual burden needed for the journey. We cannot give away what we haven't first received at His feet.
- **2. Reaching Inward (To the Church):** We reach out to our brothers and sisters right here in the body. Just because someone is saved and sitting in a pew doesn't mean they aren't struggling, hurting, or growing weary. Believers need love, encouragement, and someone to stand in the gap for them, too.
- **3. Reaching Outward (To the Lost):** We reach out to a world bound in darkness, stepping in as intercessors to stand between their destruction and the Savior who paid for their freedom.

Matthew 28:18–20

Notice where Jesus starts: **"All authority."** Because we go under His authority, reaching out means standing directly in the face of darkness and declaring with holy defiance: *"Thus far, but no further! God paid too high a price through Christ to free these people just for you to keep them bound. You can't have them—Jesus said, 'It is finished!'"*

The Threefold Ministry of Jesus

Jesus lived out a complete model of ministry designed to bring total restoration:

- **Reach Out (Missionally Minded):** Revealing God's holiness—His relentless stance against the darkness, trauma, shame, and guilt holding people bound. His truth goes out as a beacon of light to bring **deliverance** from the power of darkness.

- **Lift Up (Intentionally Compassionate):** Revealing God's love, mercy, and healing to bind up broken hearts and bring **reconciliation**.
- **Connect (Relationally Driven):** Revealing God's grace, invitation, and family hospitality to build community and bring **restoration**.

The church was never meant to be a static fortress where we sit and wait for the world to walk in. It is a sending station. The pastor's calling is to equip *you*—the body of Christ—so that in your daily life, you can step onto the front lines, intercede for the bound, and lead them into full restoration.

2. The Internal Life: Letting Jesus Flip the Switch

We can never effectively lead others out of darkness until we are deeply engaged with Jesus ourselves. Before Jesus ever released power, He received power through prayer. He grew in prayer first, power second, and miraculous breakthrough last. Even now, Scripture tells us He is interceding for us. How can we stay asleep when our Savior is praying?

Flipping the Light Switch

Darkness is only evident in the absence of light. When you walk into a pitch-black room, you don't fight the darkness or argue with it—you simply turn on the light. As believers, we were never called to contain the light or hide it under a bushel. We are called to step into dark places and let Jesus flip the switch in us! When His light shines through our lives, the darkness has no choice but to flee.

To keep that light burning brightly in a dark world, we anchor our lives in three essential rhythms:

1. **Prayer:** Prayer is capital in importance, pivotal in positioning, and transformational in practice. It keeps us aligned with the Father's heart and empowered for spiritual warfare.
2. **Fasting:** Purifies the nature of your character and purifies your faith to do the work of God.
3. **Bible Study:** Being a constant student of the Word so that Jesus is the living substance, not just the subject, of your conversations and daily life.

When we live this way, we become like the **Sea of Galilee**—constantly receiving the fresh water of God's Spirit through an inlet and constantly pouring it out to everyone around us through an outlet.

We refuse to be "Dead Sea" Christians who hoard the light and truth until life inside us becomes stagnant. Freely we have received, so freely we give.

3. Grace in Action: How We Reach the Lost

A. Fishers of Men: Deliverance First, Cleaning Later

When Jesus called His first disciples in **Matthew 4:19** (*"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"*), He taught a fundamental truth of the Kingdom: You bring the fish into the boat before you clean them.

So many broken people carry the tragic lie that they have to clean up their habits, fix their past, or get their lives together before they are worthy to come to God. The world thinks, *"I have to get good to get God."* But the Gospel whispers, *"You get God to get good!"*

We don't demand that captive people free themselves. Only Jesus breaks the chains and cleanses the human heart. Our joy is simply to meet people right where they are and introduce them to the Deliverer.

B. Divine Appointments & Holy Spirit Nudges

Being missionally minded means slowing down enough in our daily routines to tune our ears to the Holy Spirit. Think of Philip in **Acts 8**, who obeyed a simple nudge from the Spirit to approach an Ethiopian traveler's chariot.

Every single day, God places people in your path whom He has already prepared for deliverance. As you go about your day, ask: *"Lord, who are You highlighting to me right now?"* It might be a tired cashier, a grieving coworker, or a stranger cutting your hair. When the Spirit prompts your heart, your only job is to obey and flip the light switch by offering a simple word of hope.

C. Value Determined by the Cross

Human nature tempts us to reach out only to people who look like us, talk like us, or feel comfortable. But grace builds no walls. We do not have the right to decide who is "worth" hearing the Gospel. The worth of every soul was settled forever at Calvary when Jesus gave His life for them.

The Story of Jack and Julie

Evangelist Jack Cunningham shared a lesson he learned when he went for a haircut and found his regular barber unavailable. We must never judge the cover and miss a soul weeping for restoration.

4. Overcoming Fear & Pitfalls

Telling Your Story

You don't need a theology degree to be a witness. **Revelation 12:11** says, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..."* Sharing your personal testimony of how Jesus delivered you is one of the most powerful ways to turn on the light for someone else trapped in darkness.

Guarding the Heart

As intercessors stepping into spiritual warfare, we must guard against subtle traps:

- **Intimacy Over Activity:** Never let the work of God become an idol that replaces your time with God. Don't be so busy serving like Martha that you forget to sit at Jesus' feet like Mary.
- **Weeping Precedes Winning:** We will never win what we do not weep over. Real intercession requires a heart that breaks for the captive. Ask God to give you His tears for the hurting.
- **Rejection Belongs to Him:** When people reject the Gospel, remember what God told Samuel: they are not rejecting you; they are rejecting Him. Do not take it personally and never let bitterness take root.

5. Moving to the Altar: Inwardly Reaching Out

Today, we are a church who is hungry for Jesus. We are concerned and burdened for the lost. But we are also healing from our wounds. Today, I want to inwardly reach out to this church. Too often, we assume because people are in church, they are fine. Because people are strong, they have no need of help or encouragement. Because you're here every time the doors are open that somehow it makes you immune to pain, struggle or the need for prayer. It doesn't.

I see you. I hear you. And more importantly, God sees and hears you. He wants to heal you today of those wounds. I am here to stand in the gap for you today. I am thankful for you. I am grateful for you. I am proud of you. I am here to pray for you. If you need that prayer, come forward this morning and receive the healing balm of heaven. Let Jesus wash over you in His love and restore you to wholeness. If that's you here today, would you come? The altar is open.

Corporate Prayer of Release

Father, I thank You for this congregation. They are full of love and generosity. They are Your people; dearly loved and precious in Your sight. They are useful for Your kingdom. Today, they are hurting. We are not pretending wounds didn't happen or the words spoken over them didn't hurt. But I believe today, You want to heal them from those wounds.

So, I speak life over them everywhere there has been death spoken over them and this ministry. I rebuke every lie that was spoken over them and made them feel confused, threatened and in error outside of Your will. I rebuke every word curse spoken over them and release Your truth over them that says they are Your own special people like 1 Peter teaches us.

I speak peace to their minds, healing to their hearts and freedom to their spirits. Let them receive Your healing today, Father. You are still the God that heals us. Bind up their wounds and shut the open door of trauma in their lives. Loose them of every thought that holds them captive to shame, guilt, disillusionment, disqualification and inadequacy. Your grace is sufficient and Your power is made perfect in weakness.

I break every demonic stronghold and oppression from their lives. Give them the freedom only You offer them, Jesus. Fill them afresh with the Holy Spirit and fire to be who You have called, anointed and appointed them to be. I thank You, Jesus for all these things. I praise You for Your love and power that sets us free, gives us hope and the promise of eternal life. You are great and greatly to be praised! It is in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.