

Living Honestly: Evangelism Jody Mayes

[Project up Living Honestly – Evangelism]

Good Morning.

We are in Part 3 of a series entitled Living Honestly. The first week Tim spoke of being honest in our relationships. The message really spoke to me and has affected how I relate to our staff. He made a statement “some people value peacekeeping over truth-telling...” I am not going to do that anymore. The second week I spoke of being honest with God with our finances. How everything we have is His... we are just stewards or managers of God’s stuff. The Parable told us to be “shrewd” and invest our money in people and the advancement of God’s Kingdom. I challenged you to begin to give of your money to your church so that we can significantly impact the world for Jesus Christ. Many of you have accepted the challenge... our giving is up and we are right on budget. Good job Foothills! I’m proud of you... Some of you still have a “mine attitude” with your money... But hopefully we will all grow up and accept our responsibility to serve God not money.

This week we are going to look at Living Honestly in the area of evangelism.

What does it mean to live honestly? It means to be the “real deal” when it comes to your Christianity. There are a lot of people who “talk the talk... but don’t walk the walk.” Churches are full of people who go through the motions... come to church... but are never changed. Hear messages on relationships but they never treat their spouses better. Hear messages on giving... but never give. Hear a message on evangelism... but never tell anyone about Jesus. What we are looking for in this series is for each of us to become authentic Christians... the “real deal”... Cold or lukewarm Christians will never do anything great for God. I hope this series will challenge us all to get honest with God... quit playing games... quit faking it... Admit to God where we are less than honest... and become that person God wants us to become. You see... we are called to greatness... God never intended for even one of His kids to be mediocre... Not one... That’s why I describe Foothills as

a church where all the men are strong... all the women are beautiful (inside and out) and all the children are exceptional. There's nothing mediocre at Foothills... We are a church called to greatness. We are children of the only God!

Today let's get honest with God about evangelism.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7) [Shepherd background]

Turn in your Bibles (and take out your outlines) and let's read verses 1 and 2.

Now let's look at the context in which Jesus spoke this parable. The Pharisees and Scribes (religious leaders of the day) were upset at Jesus' practice of hanging out with sinners.

Keep in mind, the Pharisees were separatists ... advocated a doctrine of "salvation through segregation." Their desire was to keep themselves "holy" by not associating with sinners. They looked down on people... who were "uneducated" in spiritual matters.

Now Jesus was a radical... cause he "hung out" with sinners.

So Jesus was on a head-on collision course with this teaching of salvation through separation.

Let's read the parable: (Read verses 3-8).

Now last week, we looked at our World Mission emphasis at Foothills. We heard that Jesus expects His followers to go to all the world and make disciples... baptize them... and teach them to obey his commands. Jesus said every Christian must be totally committed to winning the world to Christ (Evangelism). That's His command... to each of us!

Now, that presents a problem. In our world today... people don't believe we have the right to proselytize... to persuade people to become Christ-followers. People frown on the practice of evangelism.

A few years ago, one of the largest denominations debated whether evangelism was a “legitimate enterprise” for the church to be involved in. Ironic... that same denomination is dying... Its numbers have gone down 500,000 in the last 10 years.

Four other denominations have lost 1 million people... all because they adopted the philosophy... the church does not have the right to evangelize... to infringe on an individual’s rights.

But Jesus says He came to seek and save the lost sheep.

Many people believe there are no lost sheep... Just by birth, you are one of God’s children... there is no need for personal redemption.

Foothills... we don’t believe this.

Other churches believe you build a church building... put a marquee out front and say to the community “Ya’ll come” and they will come.

But that is not what Jesus did... He did not sit in the temple and wait for sinners to come in. No! Jesus went out to the world... to the marketplace... to the dregs of society... seeking and saving the lost.

Jesus said, every sheep... every person matters to God... go search for him... do whatever it takes to find the lost sheep... the lost sinner.

Have you ever lost something?

...Lost your keys, billfold, credit card?

...Lost a sock in the dryer?

Some stuff we lose is no big deal.

But the value of that which is lost dictates the intensiveness of the search.

Tell story of losing Jessica, our baby daughter (4 years old.)

When something of great value is lost... you will do “whatever it takes” to find it!

That’s exactly what Jesus is teaching us in this parable... one little lost lamb... has great value.

Any lamb? Yes, any lamb! Does Jesus only care about the successful people like Bill Gates? Or does He care about little old me? In Jesus’ eyes, you are just as valuable as Bill Gates. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost... and He tells His followers to do the same.

(Read together)

Foothills Core Value: We value reaching people and believe that we must evangelistically reach out to spiritually lost people because they matter to God and therefore, they matter to us.

I read an unbelievable statistic this week. Apart from wedding and funerals... 60 million Americans have never been inside a church. 60 million! There’s at least 80,000 in Arvada/Westminster who know nothing of Jesus or have a church family.

Jesus, our leader, tells us to go to all the world... and we have yet to impact our own community. Why?

Cause we have believed a lie... that evangelism is not necessary... that it’s a negative social activity. No one has the right to influence someone else to their own religious viewpoint... human rights!

If that is true... then Jesus was the worst violator of human rights... because that was the most important thing He did... and He commanded His followers to do the same.

Can we impose our view on others? If we use a gun... or a government... No!

But the answer is yes if we witness. (Witness means to testify or tell others of something you have seen or heard.) That's all it means... Then why does it strike fear in the hearts of Christians?

Why don't Christ-followers do what Jesus commanded us to do?

Reasons I don't witness:

1. I think I'm superior.

I hope this is not the case. That's what the Pharisees did... felt superior to sinners. Some Christians have the attitude "I got it and you don't... Ha ha!" "I'm holy and bound for heaven and you're not."

When we decide to separate ourselves from sinners and to keep our kids from them... we have adopted the same philosophy the Pharisees had... salvation is through separation... I am holy... I am separated... therefore I am superior.

2. I don't really believe in heaven and hell.

I hate hell... I hate thinking about it... I hate talking about it... but it is a reality. Hell is a real place where real people go. Hell was a major theme in Jesus' ministry. Jesus taught unless people repent and put their faith in Him, they would die and face eternal condemnation.

If you and I really believed that... we would do whatever it takes to lead our loved ones and this community to Jesus the Savior of the world! We would pursue them like I did when I lost Jessica.

3. I'm afraid.

I know... we are afraid of rejection. But they are not rejecting you... they are rejecting Jesus... You are not the Savior... you are only a witness telling others what Jesus has done for you... You once were lost, but now you are found... once was blind, but now you see.

Don't be afraid! Bible says fear is not of God... So if you're afraid... who's making you afraid? That's right... the one who doesn't want you telling others about Jesus.

4. I don't make it a priority.

It falls way down the list of priorities... far down below making money and having fun... but it should be a priority... even while you are working... even while you are playing... witnessing is a lifestyle... 24/7/365. Jesus' top two priorities... Love God... love people... how do you love? By caring and confronting.

Let's look at some right motivations to witness.

1. I want to share with others what I have been given.

What you got (salvation) was a gift... you did not deserve it... that's why you should never be prideful or feel superior for being a Christian... it was a gift... God pursued you... saved you... you weren't some super-special saint before Christ and Jesus said, "O' you are sooooo good... Can I have you in heaven?" No... you were a sinner who deserved God's judgment... But He chose to extend to you grace...

If you had the cure to cancer, would you keep it to yourself... or share it with all mankind?

Well, you have something better than the cure to cancer... you have the secret to eternal life... don't you think we ought to share it?

2. I want God to use me.

There's nothing better than to have God use you to lead someone to Christ... nothing... it's "the best." Almighty God uses regular... ordinary... insecure... uneducated people like you and me to be ambassadors for His Kingdom.

That's unbelievable... we have been called to greatness!

3. I do believe in heaven and hell.

Followers of Jesus believe what the Bible says is truth. If the Bible says it... I believe it.

The Bible says there is a hell.

The Bibles says there is a heaven.

I'm motivated to witness cause I want as many people in heaven... and as few people in hell.

Which leads to our last motivation...

4. I want a party thrown in heaven.

The parable of the lost sheep says there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

There's a cosmic celebration every time a seeker submits to Christ.

I sometimes dance around my office after someone accepts Christ... "You lose, Satan... we win..."

So, what do we do Foothills?

How do we evangelize our world... our community?

Let's choose our church sign...

Foothills Community Church
"A church that believes nothing...
strongly."

"Everybody goes to heaven"... Our theme: "whatever."

Foothills Community Church

“Ya’ll Come”

We’ve done all that’s expected of us... we built a building... we put out a sign... that’s enough... it’s their responsibility to come to us.

Foothills Community Church
“Where saints are welcome...
and the rest of you can go to hell.”

We’re shouting at sinners from a distance “turn or burn” sucker...

OR

Foothills Community Church
“A church who cares.”

We’re gonna come looking for you... cause we love you. We’re gonna be like Jesus and come out into the marketplace where you are and show you what an authentic Christian looks like. We’re not gonna just talk the talk... we’re gonna walk the walk... We’re gonna be there for you... cause we love you... and we’re gonna gently lead you to our Savior by accepting you... by loving you unconditionally... by not judging you... We want you to come be a part of our community of Christ-followers. Let me tell you what our church’s vision is...

Foothills Vision:

The vision of Foothills Community Church is to be a caring community of believers that significantly impacts the world for Jesus Christ.

Come... be a part of a caring community of Christ-followers.

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