

BRINGING GOOD NEWS, PART 3: OUR PARTNERS **VARIOUS PASSAGES**

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Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon (Series) Introduction

Today, we are closing out our three-part sermon series on "Bringing Good News."

- Two weeks ago, we looked at our *motivation* for evangelism.
- Last week, we looked at our *confidence* in evangelism.
- And today, we'll close out by looking at our *partners* in evangelism.

So let's get right into today's sermon on *our partners*.

Sermon Introduction

To begin, I want us to think about the most difficult things in life—and ask yourself, would I want to do those things alone?

- If you were to fight an army, would you want to do it alone?
- If you were to start a company, would you want to do it alone?
- If you were to parent a child, would you want to do it alone?
- If you were to train for a marathon, would you want to do it alone?

My guess is that *none* of us would want to do any of those difficult things *by ourselves*.

Yet for some reason, when it comes to *evangelism*, when it comes to proclaiming the gospel to persuade others to put their trust in Jesus Christ—which many of us would probably say is one of the most difficult things for us to do—we try to do it alone.

But God, in his love and wisdom for us, never called us to evangelize all by ourselves, but he gives us the local church as partners to bring the good news of Jesus to others.

The church is made up of gospel friends on gospel mission. And just as having faithful friends alongside us makes all the difference in fighting an army, starting a company, parenting a child, or training for a marathon, having gospel friends alongside us should make all the difference in our calling to share the gospel to those around us.

And that's what we're going to unpack more in today's sermon.

The One Thing

***God gives us the local church as partners
to bring the good news of Jesus to others.***

Scripture Introduction

Each week, we usually preach expositional sermons through one passage of Scripture, but today we're going to take a different approach and look at various passages to address issues related to our partners in evangelism, namely the local church.

Overview

We'll look at two ways we live out this partnership with the local church as we bring the good news of Jesus to others:

- I. We support one another to share the gospel outside the church
- II. We showcase the gospel together as the church

I. We support one another to share the gospel outside the church

Apostle Paul is probably known to be one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived. He seemed to share the gospel everywhere he went—in the synagogues, in the marketplace, in prison. Even when he was stoned and thought to be dead, he got up and went back into the city. On some level, he *was* a great evangelist, but if we're not careful, we'll mistakenly think that he became that way *all by himself*—as if he was just *naturally* that way without the help of others.

But that's simply not true.

First, Paul was sent out *with* Barnabas *from* the church in Antioch *after* they had fasted and prayed for them (Acts 13:1-3), and then he traveled with faithful gospel friends who labored alongside him in the gospel—like Barnabas, Mark, Luke, Timothy, Titus, and Silas. Paul wasn't alone, and he and his Christian friends undoubtedly mutually encouraged one another to continue to faithfully proclaim the gospel to others despite their limitations and fears. And so, Paul constantly referred to his *partnership* with others in the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:5; 2:22, 25; 4:2-3).

Second, if we read what Paul writes about the church—how members of the body are meant to mutually *build* one another up, and how *no* body part is dispensable, but how we all absolutely *need* one another in the Christian life (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4)—then there is *no way* we would think that Paul had any kind of individualistic understanding of *any* part of the Christian life, let alone evangelism.

Third, Paul asked churches to pray for him regarding his evangelism.

Ephesians 6:19-20 (NIV) = Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Colossians 4:3-4 (NIV) = And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Paul asked his fellow brothers and sisters to pray that he would proclaim the gospel fearlessly and clearly. He never saw himself as some super-evangelist who preferred to fly solo. No, Paul *knew* that he was a struggling evangelist who absolutely *needed* the support of fellow Christians to share the gospel outside the church. And by God's design, he received that support through local churches.

Now when most people think of evangelism, we probably think of it as a sport of *individuals*. One person goes out alone and shares the gospel with someone else. And on some level, that's true. That's what many refer to as *personal* evangelism.

But I want us to think of evangelism more as a *team* sport. Even though we may all be going out and sharing the gospel with others in our lives at different times and places, we are not alone, but we have a whole church behind us supporting us.

Biblical evangelism is never *purely* personal evangelism, but it always has the local church in view.

When I was in high school, I used to wrestle.

And on the surface, wrestling looks like a sport of *individuals*. One team sends out their best wrestler for a certain weight class and the other team sends out their best wrestler at that weight—and it's a one-on-one wrestling match from there.

But in my experience, wrestling is more a *team* sport than we may realize. I trained with my wrestling team for 2 hours a day every weekday during the wrestling season and we trained together twice a week during the off-season and went to wrestling camps together. When someone missed practice, other members of the team would go looking for him and see why he missed. And when we trained, if any team member was slacking, our coach would tell us to say something to him because his slacking not only made *him* a worse wrestler, but it also made *us* worse because it taught us to slack too. So we all trained hard and we all got better because of it.

And in matches, even though only *one* member of the team was on the mat wrestling, if he was struggling, team members would slam their hands on the mat and yell from the side, "Come on! Get up!" And they would clap their hands and get the rest of the people in the stands to clap their hands in a rhythm that we could recognize from the mat, which was basically like "Semangat!" in Indonesian or "Jia you!" in Mandarin (I don't know what the English equivalent of it is). But as you heard your teammates shouting and the rhythmic clapping, it didn't matter how tired you were on the mat, it didn't matter how much you wanted to give up, you suddenly got a burst of energy and somehow somehow you got up, you took the guy down, or you did something else. But you wouldn't just stay there and do nothing and just wait for the match to end.

And if you won the match, the entire team was there to celebrate with you. And if you lost the match, the entire team was there to comfort you, to encourage you, and to be right there with you the next day to help you get better.

I started wrestling for the first time when I walked into high school. And for the most part, that was the case for all of us on the team. We were a bunch of Joe Schmoes—ordinary guys that had no idea what we were doing when we first joined the wrestling team. But in my last two years in high school, we were two-time state champions and we only lost once as a team.

And so, if you asked any one of us, "So is wrestling a sport of *individuals* or a *team* sport?" all of us would undoubtedly say, "Wrestling is definitely a *team* sport."

Now *that* is how I want us to view evangelism.

When you walk out into the world and share the gospel with someone else, you are not alone, but you have the whole church supporting you. In a sense, all the conversations you've had with fellow brothers and sisters about your relationship with God, your struggles, the gospel, and how that applies in different areas of your life is all *practice* for sharing the gospel with those outside the church. And when you've been missing from church community for some time, fellow members go looking for you and see why that's the case. And when you're slacking in your relationship with God, in your discipling relationships, or in your relationships with the lost around you, we speak to one another in love about it because not only does that negatively affect *you*, but it also negatively affects *others* by teaching them that it's ok to be slack in these *vital* relationships.

And when we're struggling in evangelism, perhaps because we're not sure what to say, or we're afraid of losing relationships, or we're afraid of messing up someone's salvation, we have each other as fellow evangelists that we've trained with to remind us of...

- our motivation of our personal experience of the gospel,
- our motivation of obeying out of love for God,
- our motivation of being moved by Christ's compassion for the lost,
- our motivation of giving worship to God that he deserves,
- our confidence in the power of the gospel and the God who made our mouths,
- our confidence in the sovereignty of God,
- and so forth.

And somehow somehow, God uses our fellow brothers and sisters to encourage us and enable to do what we could never do on our own. And in those times when we faithfully share the gospel with others, the entire church is there to celebrate with us. And in those times when we let fear get the better of us, or when we make mistakes in the manner that we share about Jesus with others, the entire church is there to comfort us, to encourage us, and to be right there the next day to help us get better.

Everything I'm describing is what you could call a "culture of evangelism."¹

When there is a *culture of evangelism*, when it's *normal* to intentionally share the gospel to persuade others to put their trust in Jesus, everyone is better equipped and everyone is more emboldened to evangelize.

Imagine that there's a member in our church named Clarence. And Clarence has loved ones that are not yet believers in Jesus Christ.

And let's say that as Clarence comes to our church-wide Prayer Gathering:

- One member asks the church for prayer for a friend that they're seeking opportunities to share the gospel with.
- Another member praises God for how they were able to move conversation from the surface to the serious to the spiritual with their unbelieving parents.
- A third member shares about how her unbelieving mother got offended and shut down the conversation as soon as she mentioned the prospect of her getting baptized, and Clarence sees how other members in the church rallied around her to support and pray for her and her mother. And perhaps one day, her mother puts her faith in Christ, and Clarence sees the whole church in tears with her, celebrating alongside her because they've been spiritual family and partners with her in the gospel throughout.

Think about how *encouraging* it would be for Clarence to hear these other members share about how they're trying to share the gospel with their family and friends and how the church rallies around them in support.

- He would feel more comfortable to ask for prayer for evangelistic opportunities for his own loved ones.
- He would know who to talk to if he wanted counsel on how to move conversations from the surface to the serious to the spiritual.
- He would know that others can relate with the fears he has of how his loved ones might respond if he shared the gospel with them because they've gone through it themselves, and he could ask them how they dealt with it.

Now, imagine a different scenario. Let's say that as Clarence comes to our church-wide Prayer Gathering:

- Nobody asks for prayer regarding evangelistic opportunities.
- Nobody shares about how they've tried to move conversations from the surface to serious to spiritual with their loved ones.
- Nobody shares about hard responses from their loved one and how they dealt with it, and so the church never rallies around them.
- But let's say Clarence finally *does* hear of someone putting their faith in Christ. Rather than the whole church celebrating in a unified way, Clarence thinks of it more in terms of "good for you" because he doesn't feel connected to their story at all because he was never invited to pray for that person and he had no idea anyone was reaching out to them.

¹ J. Mack Stiles (*Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014], 47-61) describes a culture of evangelism as (1) a culture motivated by love for Jesus and his gospel, (2) a culture that is confident in the gospel, (3) a culture that understands the danger of entertainment, (4) a culture that sees people clearly, (5) a culture that pulls together as one, (6) a culture in which people teach one another, (7) a culture that models evangelism, (8) a culture in which people who are sharing their faith are celebrated, (9) a culture that knows how to affirm and celebrate new life, (10) a culture doing ministry that feels risky and is dangerous, and (11) a culture that understands that the church is the chosen and best method of evangelism. He also lists the following benefits of communal evangelism: we hold one another accountable; we strengthen our mutual resolve; we learn from one another; we rejoice together in success and cry together in failure; and we bond through shared experiences in intense situations (43).

Think about how *discouraging* it would be for Clarence to be to hear *nothing* about how other members are trying to share the gospel with their family and friends.

But not only would such a culture be *discouraging*, but it would be *debilitating*.

The reality is that if we *don't* have a culture of evangelism in the church that *supports* us in sharing the gospel outside the church, we eventually just *won't* evangelize.

The culture of the world is *not* begging us to share with the gospel with them. And even though we know that we have the greatest news of eternal salvation, our natural flesh will resist us every step of the way as we try to bring the gospel to others. And Satan and his demonic forces will do everything they can to keep our mouths shut, so that others have no opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and be saved.

When all those winds are constantly blowing on us, it's hard to stay aflame when we're by ourselves. A single flame is easily snuffed out by the wind. But ironically, when there is a considerable fire, wind actually *spreads* it and turns it into a *wildfire* that cannot be easily extinguished.

So how can we cultivate a healthy culture of evangelism in our church? How can we support one another to share the gospel outside the church?

Let me just offer three suggestions.

How can we support one another to share the gospel outside the church?

1. Ask and share with one another.

First, ask and share with one another.

When I meet with other brothers in the church, one question that we've started to regularly ask each other is: Have you had any spiritual conversations/attempts with non-believers since we last met?

If so, we share how it went and we encourage one another. If not, we ask more questions to better understand our different constraints, and we share different ideas for how we can address those constraints and be more intentional about being in contexts with non-believers.

And if several months go by, and I haven't had any spiritual conversations/attempts with non-believers, then something is not right. And I need my brother to call me out on that and help me to take steps forward for my *own* spiritual good and for the spiritual good of *others* around me.

Remember, I *want* to share the gospel with my loved ones who don't know Jesus and I *need* the help of my fellow brothers to help keep that in the forefront of my mind.

It's so easy for busyness or fears to crowd out one of the most important callings I have. So even though it might be easier for my brother to just accept some version of "it is what it is" from me, I need him to press in a bit more and help me brainstorm how I can move forward rather than being complacent in indefinite disobedience.

So ask and share with one another.

Second, ask and pray with one another.

How can we support one another to share the gospel outside the church?

1. Ask and share with one another.
2. Ask and pray with one another.

In your discipling relationships, in your LIFE Group, in our church-wide Prayer Gathering, ask for prayer regarding evangelistic opportunities with family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or acquaintances. Make this a regular prayer request that you ask others to pray for you about.

Recently, my wife Tina and I asked different people in our church for prayer regarding evangelistic opportunities with certain people in our lives. And as they prayed for us, we shared how we tried to move conversation from the surface to serious to spiritual, and how it didn't quite go as smoothly as we had hoped. So we asked them to pray for us again as we were planning to try again the next day.

And by God's grace, the next day I was able to share a bit of my conversion testimony over a meal, including what the gospel is that I believed, and we were both able to share how we came to Indonesia because we wanted more people to hear the good news of Jesus that has transformed both of our lives. They listened intently, but they haven't put their trust in Jesus yet.

Afterwards, we shared with those who had been praying for us and they celebrated with us how God opened up that evangelistic opportunity and how he gave us the love and boldness to share with them. And we're longing and praying for more evangelistic opportunities with them in the future.

So ask and pray with one another.

Third, ask and learn from one another.

How can we support one another to share the gospel outside the church?

1. Ask and share with one another.
2. Ask and pray with one another.
3. Ask and learn from one another.

After we celebrated this recent evangelistic opportunity with others, one person began asking me exactly how we moved the conversation from the surface to serious to spiritual. And after I shared, they shared more context about people in their lives that they're trying to reach and asked me for counsel on how they could go about sharing the gospel with them. And so, I shared some more from other similar previous experiences. And hopefully, that person will be better equipped for evangelistic opportunities in the near future.

As a sidenote: if you're having spiritual conversations with a non-believer and they seem open to learn more, I would always recommend that you ask them to read and discuss Scripture with you. There's nothing more powerful than God's Word and discovering who Jesus is directly from Scripture for themselves.

I usually recommend one of two resources that help take someone through the Gospel account of Mark, which is the shortest Gospel account in the Bible. One resource goes through Mark in *six* sessions; the other goes through Mark in *eight* sessions.² They're both very simple and helpful guides; several people in our church have already used them to go through Mark's Gospel account with others. If you'd like access to either or both resources, you can find links in the footnotes of the manuscript for this sermon on our church's website.

Now there's one more thing I need to mention regarding supporting one another to share the gospel outside the church.

When a believer experiences rejection and perhaps even persecution from their family and friends as they try to share the gospel with them, we need to be ready to be their spiritual family.

Of course, that means listening, trying our best to understand, comforting with God's Word, and praying for them. But that might also mean offering them a place to stay, financially supporting them, or helping in other tangible ways.

If we are a church, then Christ has made us brothers and sisters with one another. We *are* a spiritual family. And that cannot be by name alone, but we must strive to be there for one another as best as we

² For *six* sessions through Mark's Gospel account, see https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1S9UeIR_xAehTkZ_zKf2X5MUjd-7PGK; for *eight* sessions through Mark's Gospel account, see <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0147/1830/4342/files/OTOBR-Sheets-for-copying-A4.pdf?42055> (pages 14-21). Any of the books under "Gospel Fundamentals Series" in our digital library are also helpful to read with non-believers: <https://jakarta.hmcc.net/resources/digital-library-in-partnership-with-9marks/>.

can in tangible ways, especially in such times of need when our brothers and sisters are suffering for the name of Christ.

So first, we support one another to share the gospel outside the church, and second...

II. We showcase the gospel together as the church

We've already noted earlier that the apostle Paul didn't evangelize alone, but he constantly has gospel friends on gospel mission alongside him wherever he went. And this was significant not only so that they could *support one another* to share the gospel outside the church, but also so that they should *showcase* the gospel *together* as the church.

In Acts 17, Paul and his companions proclaimed the gospel in the city of Thessalonica, many came to believe, and a local church was established there. But later on, as Paul recounts how the Thessalonians came to believe in the gospel, he writes this in...

1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:8-10 (NIV) = ... You know how **we** lived among you for your sake... Because **we** loved you so much, **we** were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but **our** lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, **our** toil and hardship; **we** worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while **we** preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless **we** were among you who believed.

The main thing I want us to notice here is the plural pronouns of "we" and "our." Paul was not some lone Christian trying to evangelize those in Thessalonica, but he and his gospel friends did it *together*.

And notice how they did it. Yes, they shared the gospel, but they also shared their lives with them. They loved them and lived life closely with them. And the Thessalonians knew them well enough to know that their work ethic and character were above reproach. And what was probably strange to the Thessalonians was that it wasn't just *Paul* who lived like that, but *Silas* and *Timothy* as well.

Essentially, Paul, Silas, and Timothy became friends with the Thessalonians. Paul didn't keep his Christian friends and his non-Christian friends separate from one another, but he merged them together, so that they all became close friends with one another.

And in the context of close friendship, Paul, Silas, and Timothy not only shared the gospel with their Thessalonian friends, but they also lived such distinct lives that the Thessalonians couldn't help take notice of it—and their lives together became a powerful confirmation of the truth of the gospel message itself. And so, many of their Thessalonian friends came to believe in the good news of Jesus Christ, and a church was established there.

Now let's imagine the scenario in Thessalonica differently. Let's say you are one of the unbelieving Thessalonians, and Paul was all alone there trying to befriend and share the gospel with you and your friends.

- He's telling you that God created everyone and everything, and how we're all accountable to him.
- He's telling you that we've all sinned against God and rightfully deserve eternal punishment for our sin.
- He's telling you that God still loves us and came in the person of Jesus Christ to live, die, and resurrect in our place to take the punishment we deserved for our sins and to give us the righteousness we could never earn.
- So now, if we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we can be forgiven our sins, counted righteous in God's sight, adopted as children on God, and have eternal life.

You've never heard anything like this gospel message before. And your new friend, Paul, is the *only* person saying this to you. You admit that he lives a life that is honorable and distinct from the rest of your friends, but you're having a very hard time even *understanding* what he's talking about, let alone *believing* it.

At the end of the day, God sovereignly saves, but he also sovereignly uses the *means* of the *whole church*—not just individual Christians who are all alone.

In fact, you could say that this is part of God's *purpose* for the church.

Ephesians 3:10-12 = so that **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God might now be *made known* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was **according to the eternal purpose** that he has realized *in Christ Jesus* our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence *through our faith* in him.

At least in part, God's eternal purpose is that "*through the church* the manifold wisdom of God might now be *made known*."

By design, God's manifold wisdom in the gospel of Jesus Christ is made known not simply through *lone Christians*, but through *local churches*.³

The church is not a building or a service, but it is a *people*. In other words, you don't *go* to church but we *are* the church. And when non-believers encounter not just a *single* Christian but they begin to befriend *multiple* members of a church, the gospel becomes much more plausible to them because they're not only hearing the gospel from more than one person, but they're also seeing the gospel lived out in a community of people.

And so, when the church is being the church that we're called to be, whether gathered or scattered, *everyone* in heaven and on earth begins to take notice.

Recently, a brother in our church wrote a reflection of how he came to know Christ through interacting with multiple members in our church, which he's given me permission to share. This is what he wrote:

When I first visited HMCC, its community was unlike anything I've experienced before. Within the first few months, I was invited to multiple group hangouts and had 1-on-1 meetings with various brothers. A few things stood out to me. During the hangouts, worship songs were playing and people were singing (at the time, I didn't know people actually sang Christian music outside of church!). During the 1-on-1 meetings, we prayed out loud before our meals (which was strange, and a bit embarrassing, because we were out in public!). And on top of that, the brothers I talked to were very vulnerable in talking about their sins (I thought our sins should be kept private!). I also learned that these brothers are actually quite different from one another (in terms of jobs, personalities, and experiences), yet they're still friends - because they go to the same church (?).

Gradually, I also joined Life Group more consistently (where I learned how to read the Bible - something I used to think was impossible!), and I joined a couple of prayer walks (where I learned how to pray for complete strangers - something I never imagined myself doing!). Though I was still a new Christian, and still discovering how to have a personal relationship with God, my conclusion about this community was: "they're serious about Jesus." Over time, God used this community to reveal the gospel to me: both what it truly means and how it is to be lived out.

Don't ever underestimate the power of normal Christian interaction. As Christians and members of Christ's church, we spontaneously sing worship songs, we give thanks to God, we share vulnerably, we befriend those who are very different than us, we read and apply God's Word to our lives, and we pray for people.

All of these things are very *normal* things that we do together in our everyday lives and we probably don't give much thought to it. But by God's grace and design, these ordinary things that we do together as a church are the very means he uses to confirm the power and truth of the gospel message to those around us.

³ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop (*The Compelling Community* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], 25) clarify that we know that Paul is referring to a local church here and not just the universal church because of three reasons: "(1) What is true of the heavenly assembly should also be true of the local assembly.... (2) Much of the rest of the epistle will discuss relationships between believers in a local church. (3) The focus of 3:10 is the present, not an assembly someday in heaven. The assembly of Jews and Gentiles *today* is the local church. And each congregation points to the larger, grander assembly of all peoples in Revelation 7."

So how can we showcase the gospel together as the church?

Let me just offer three suggestions.

First, invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.

How can we showcase the gospel together as the church?

1. Invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.

Rather than having your church friends and your non-Christian friends stay separate, do your best to merge together your circle of friends.

If you're grabbing a meal, playing games, watching a movie, going karaoke, running on Car Free Day, or doing something else with your non-Christian friends, ask if it'd be ok to bring along another friend or two to join too. In most cases, I doubt that should be a problem. And then, go and invite a church member or two to come along with you.

And if you're that church member being asked to go hangout with that person's non-Christian friends, do your best to go, if you're able, as a way to support one another to share the gospel, and as a way to showcase the gospel together as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

And while you're there, genuinely try to get to know people and build friendships. If it's appropriate, perhaps exchange numbers with someone you're getting to know there.

And then, next time there's a hangout with church members, there wouldn't just be one Christian friend inviting him to join, but multiple friends inviting him. And if he comes, he wouldn't be the new guy who doesn't know anybody, but from the beginning, he would already know a few people, and would get to know and build friendships with even more Christian friends.

Last month, a handful of church members organized a frisbee hangout at Lapangan Banteng Park near Monas. And when I arrived with my family, there was a mix of people from multiple LIFE Groups, multiple life stages, non-Christians I had met years before but haven't seen in a while who came because church members invited them, and random strangers at the park who just joined in. I saw church members not just talking to each other, but also having conversations with others there. I don't recall anyone standing by themselves, but everyone seemed engaged and enjoying their time with one another.

On some level, I think we would all love to take part in these kinds of intentional hangouts; we love the *idea* of it. But on another level, when we're actually there, we feel overwhelmed with *insecurity*. You don't want to approach someone new and initiate a conversation with them. Perhaps that insecurity keeps you from accepting any invitations from church members to join them in building relationships with their non-Christian friends.

Let me just say that I can relate. I'm an introvert. I don't like being in crowds. It's hard for me to start conversations, enter into conversations, continue conversations, and even end conversations. I'm not someone who is naturally socially adept at all. I know what it's like to circle a room, trying to muster up the courage to talk to someone. I know what it's like to busy myself with other things, so that I have an excuse to not talk to anyone. So I understand what it feels like to be insecure, especially in a room of people that I'm meeting for the first time.

But at the same time, I know what it means to be secure in Christ. I know that what God thinks of me is infinitely more important than what others think of me. I know that obeying Christ and living with a clear conscience is immensely more satisfying than disobeying him and living with unending excuses. And so, I remind myself of who I am in Christ, I ask him for his help to obey, and then I leave my comfort zone for the sake of the gospel to love and get to know someone else.

I've had some really awkward conversations before, but you know what? None of them have hurt me in the way that my insecurity always imagines that they would. Rather, I experience God's pleasure in taking steps of obedience, I share my awkward experience with someone else who is more socially adept so that I can learn from them, and I'm emboldened to try again next time.

Now with that said, let me also say that if you're the one inviting church members to hang out with your non-Christians friends, it would be extremely helpful if you don't just leave them out to dry and act like you don't know each other. But introduce them to your friends and help them enter into conversations with you. For many, it will help them a lot more than you realize.

Let me also remind us that part of joining these hangouts is to showcase the gospel together as a church, so that our non-Christian friends have more than just one Christian friend. That means, don't hide the fact that you're a Christian. Let them know that you know one another because you're part of the same church. In the midst of conversations, see if it may be appropriate to move from the surface to serious to spiritual. If it's relevant, be willing to share vulnerably about your own personal struggles and how you've been processing it in light of your relationship with God. Again, this is easier and more effective when there are multiple Christians who are present to support and embolden one another. Of course, be wise and tactful, but the point is: don't filter or hide the fact that you're a follower of Christ.

One last thing I'll say for this first suggestion is that it's a long-term endeavor. Friendships don't usually form in one-off hangouts. But as we continue to intentionally merge together our circle of friends, by God's grace, genuine friendships begin to form. And our hope is that God will use our lives together as Christians to confirm the gospel message that we share with our non-Christian friends.

So invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.

Second, invite church members to partner with you in missional initiatives.

How can we showcase the gospel together as the church?

1. Invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.
2. Invite church members to partner with you in missional initiatives.

If the first suggestion was more *informal*, this suggestion is more *formal*.

This is when a group of Christians decide to start something together for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.

This would be like New Hope Refugee Ministries or Team Somalia, which are missional initiatives started by members at HMCC of Tangerang and HMCC of Jakarta to meet some of the felt needs of the refugee communities in our city, and specifically to share the gospel with them through building friendships and studying God's Word together.

There's also Anak Harapan Indonesia, which is another missional initiative started by members of our church to provide basic educational needs to underprivileged children in the Kembangan area and to seek opportunities to have spiritual conversations with their families.

I know that many of our church members have partnered with these various ministries in various ways, whether through online or in-person teaching, distributing care packages, sending handwritten cards, taking family portraits, donating clothes, and supporting financially.

You don't necessarily have to start something new. If there are already existing fruit-bearing missional initiatives, these are great opportunities to come alongside fellow church members to showcase the gospel together in ministering to many non-Christians around us.

And these missional initiatives don't need to be something so big or complex either.

In my first few years in Indonesia, me and another church member started something called "English Corner" on the university campus. Each week, we would have a theme and we would teach English idioms that were related to that theme (like "brushing something under the rug"), and then the students would practice using them in smaller groups.

And as more students came, we invited more church members to come to help facilitate the smaller groups of students. And through English Corner, friendships were built between church members and

students, we invited students to our church gatherings, and I recall one student who, after hearing one of our sermons on dating, sent it to his friends and then invited them to church. And then more students started coming out to our church.

And that leads us to our third suggestion.

Third, invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings.

How can we showcase the gospel together as the church?

1. Invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.
2. Invite church members to partner with you in missional initiatives.
3. Invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings.

Of course, evangelism is certainly *more* than this, but it shouldn't be *less* than this.

The previous two suggestions for showcasing the gospel together as a church are about going *out* together, but this last one is about inviting people *in*.

If the community of the local church is *confirmation* of the gospel message, where is the greatest concentration of the local church community? It's not three Christians at a hangout, it's not a group of Christians at a LIFE Group hangout, but it's the entire assembly of the local church in our corporate gatherings.

The most powerful witness to the gospel message is the *gathered church*. Our Sunday Celebrations are saturated in God's Word from beginning to end. We read the Word, hear the Word preached, pray the Word, sing the Word, and see the Word in the Lord's Supper. And all of that points to the good news of Jesus Christ.

And not only that, but as the family of God, even if everything else is different about us, we have a depth of commitment to one another that is closer than even blood because of our common bond in Christ. So when someone walks into our church gatherings and sees people who are very different from one another and yet care so deeply for one another, it doesn't make sense apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The world does not operate like that. In the world, like is attracted to like, and different stays away from different (cf. Matt. 5:46-47). But *that's* what makes this community *supernatural*; it does *not* operate like the world, but it reaches and includes people who are *so* different and far apart and even were hostile towards one another, who, apart from the supernatural power of the gospel, would never unite together.

And we're not just in the same proximity where we just *tolerate* each other, but we're so tightly *committed* to one another, so tightly *bonded* to one another, that the Bible calls us "one new man," "fellow citizens," and "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:15-19).

But at this time, let's ask ourselves an honest question: Am I contributing to the kind of church community that I would want to invite my non-Christian friends to?

If my non-Christian friend were to come to Sunday Celebration:

- Would they see me engaged in singing to my God, or would they see me just quietly observing others sing?
- Would they see me taking notes during the preaching of God's Word, or would they see me checking my messages or falling asleep?
- Would they see me talking to people who are different than me, genuinely trying to get to know them better, or would they see me leave right away without talking to anyone, or only engaged with people I already knew well?

You may not realize it, but one of the greatest ways you can contribute to evangelism is to simply be a good church member.

- Become a member of a church
- Gather regularly with your church

- Engage personally in worship with your church
- Intentionally get to know and build friendships with fellow members of your church no matter how different they are
- Talk about God's Word with your church
- Pray together with your church

If you're a Christian, none of these things should seem so extraordinary. They're just the ordinary things that we do together as a church. But again, when the church is doing the very *normal* things that we're called to do, it is a powerful confirmation of the truth of the gospel.

So invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings—and personally contribute to the kind of church community that you would want to invite your non-Christian friends to.

Now if we *showcase* the gospel together *as a church*, then it would be foolish for us to try to evangelize in isolation of the church.

Doing evangelism all by myself would be like trying to describe chocolate to someone who have never tasted it before, but only using words—even though I have a bar of chocolate in my hand that I *could* just give to them to taste for themselves.

Doing evangelism all by myself would be like trying to give directions to someone from Jakarta to Banyuwangi to someone who has never been there before, but only using words—even though I have a map or GPS in my pocket that I *could* just give them to see and use for themselves.

Including the local church in evangelism is like giving them the chocolate to *taste* and giving them the map to *see*. Yes, use your words to share the gospel, but it'll make a whole lot more sense to them when they can taste and see the gospel in the life of the church and its members.

And by God's grace, when someone puts their trust in Jesus Christ, *because* they interacted with *so many* members along their journey, my hope is that it wouldn't just be *one* person who "led" the person to Christ. Rather, one member planted, another member watered, but God gave the growth (1 Cor. 3:6).

As we close, let me just encourage us with one last partner in bringing the good news of Jesus to others. Not only has God given us the *local church*, but he has given us *himself* as the greatest partner in evangelism.

For in commanding his church to go and make disciples—that is, to evangelize—he says to us, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

You may feel inadequate and afraid, the task may seem difficult and overwhelming, but one thing we can be sure of: we are not alone.

And throughout the course of human history, we find that followers of Christ in every age have found that to be more than enough to faithfully bring the good news of Jesus to others.

Life Application

It's just a review of some of the practical steps we've talked about throughout.

1. Support one another to share the gospel outside the church:
 - a. Ask and share with one another.
 - b. Ask and pray with one another.
 - c. Ask and learn from one another.
2. Showcase the gospel together as the church:
 - a. Invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends, and vice versa.
 - b. Invite church members to partner with you in missional initiatives.
 - c. Invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings.

The One Thing

*God gives us the local church as partners
to bring the good news of Jesus to others.*

Conclusion

If you're able, can we all stand as we respond to God's Word?