

***THEME SUNDAY: REVEALING JESUS***  
**VARIOUS PASSAGES**  
Pastor Eric Yee

## **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.

## **Church Theme Introduction**

Each year, we have a church theme as the *ethos* or characteristic culture we want to embody as a church for the year. Our church theme helps to focus and unify us as a church, so that we're moving together throughout the year.

Last year, our church theme was "Rediscover Church," where we centered on *rediscovering* what it means to cultivate a culture of discipling and gospel-revealing community as the church gathered, and *rediscovering* what it means to love our neighbors and our gospel workers sent to disciple the nations as the church scattered.

And this year, our church theme is "Revealing Jesus," where we want to focus on *revealing Jesus* with our lives and our words to one another and to the world around us as individual believers and collectively as the church of Jesus Christ.

There's a connection between last year's theme and this year's theme. As we have been "rediscovering church" this past year, "revealing Jesus" should be the inevitable effect.

So that's what we'll be unpacking more in today's sermon as we focus on our church theme for the year, "Revealing Jesus."

## **The One Thing**

***Let's reveal Jesus with our lives and words as individual Christians  
and the local church.***

## **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 church theme of "Revealing Jesus."

## **Overview**

We'll look at two ways of revealing Jesus:

- I. Revealing Jesus with our lives
- II. Revealing Jesus with our words

## **I. Revealing Jesus with our lives**

### **A. As individual Christians**

If I told you to go start revealing Jesus tomorrow, what would you do? What would it look like? Where would you even start?

Before we can reveal Jesus with our lives, we need to know what Jesus' life and ministry was like, and especially how it was experienced by others around him.

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry is introduced to us in the Gospel account of Luke with Jesus in his hometown synagogue. In order to explain what his ministry would be all about, Jesus takes from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and he reads these words in...

Luke 4:18-19 (ESV)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And as we continue to see Jesus' ministry throughout the Gospel accounts, we see that's exactly what he does.

- Jesus proclaims, "Bless are you who are *poor*, for yours in the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20) and he fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Luke 9:10-17).
- He liberates those who are held *captive* and oppressed by *demons* (e.g., Luke 4:33-36; 8:27-33; 9:38-42).
- And he gives sight to the *blind* (Luke 18:35-43), along with healing the sick, leprous, paralyzed, and deformed—and even raising the dead.

So now, as believers in Jesus Christ, *our* work should point to *his* work. We are to *reveal* Jesus to others in a similar way as Jesus did—through good works, especially for the weak, marginalized, and broken in our society.

And as individual Christians, this should be expressed in *all* areas of our lives—personal, family, work, church, and neighbor.

But for the sake of time, we'll primarily focus on the area of *work* right now. One of the most *crucial* places to reveal Jesus with our lives is in and through our workplace.

Work accounts for about 50% of our waking hours on any given weekday. We spend around 2,200 hours per year at work, compared to about 100 hours per year as a gathered church. As important as the gathered local church is, and we'll look at that next to see just how important it is in revealing Jesus, revealing Jesus must *not* stay confined to only the 100 hours a year that we come together as a gathered church, but it *must* permeate the other 2,200 hours a year that we spend at work.

When we participate in restoring brokenness in and through our work—whether that's the *personal* brokenness of our colleagues, clients, or stakeholders; or whether that's *systemic* brokenness in our company, industry, or society—we are pointing people to the greater restoration that Jesus offers for sinners in the gospel.

As Christians, we bear the name of Christ, and so, how we live our lives inevitably reveals to the rest of the world what Jesus is like.

As Christians, if we work just to make a living, or to use others for our own benefit, or to make a name for ourselves, we lie about who Jesus is. But if we work sacrificially for the good of others to the glory of God, then our lives tell the truth of who Jesus is—because that's how Jesus carried out all his work, which is ultimately seen as he hung naked on a cross as our substitute Savior.

Most people will not first encounter Christians in *churches* but in and through *workplaces*. And therefore, most people will first get a glimpse of Jesus through individual Christians—through *you*.

Ask yourself this: as people interact with you in your day-to-day work life and as people are on the receiving end of your day-to-day work, what are you revealing about who Jesus is?

I don't know if anyone here knows who Arthur Guinness was, but let me share a bit about him.

Arthur Guinness was an Irish brewer, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, but most importantly, he was a *Christian*.

When Guinness moved to the city of Dublin in the mid-1700s, people were drinking from the same water in which they dumped their garbage and sewage—and dying as a result. Consequently, many in the city avoided drinking water but instead drank alcohol because the process of making alcoholic drinks killed the germs in the water. But that resulted in what became known as “the Gin Craze,” where drunkenness was a major problem, leading to an increase in crime and poverty.

So, seeing this desperate situation, Guinness saw it as his Christian duty to use his ability to brew beer for the good of the city. He created a new style of beer, known as “stout,” which was nutritious, filling, and much lower in alcohol than gin.<sup>1</sup> And that was the beginning of “Guinness Brewery.”

And in his company, Guinness paid his employees wages that were 10-20% higher than average, and provided subsidies for funeral expenses, educational benefits, and a guaranteed two pints of Guinness beer a day. At the time, no other companies were providing these kinds of benefits. And so, the name “Guinness” began to be known for generosity.

Not only that, but before Corporate Social Responsibility was ever a “thing,” Guinness hired a Chief Medical Officer to visit almost 2,000 homes of its employees, representing nearly 10,000 employees and their dependents. And as a result, Guinness built quality homes that the company's staff could rent at subsidized rates, which helped lift them out of poverty and allowed them to escape the slums of Dublin.

All of this was driven by Guinness's Christian faith and his understanding that everything belongs to God.<sup>2</sup> In other words, as a representative of Christ, Guinness worked sacrificially for the good of others to the glory of God—and many lives in his city were transformed. And what the poor experienced *physically* through a *Christian's* work in the city was a beautiful, revealing picture of what sinners can experience *spiritually* through *Christ's* work on the cross. A Christian's work is a winsome witness for Christ, as people often *experience* the gospel through a Christian's *life* before they *understand* the gospel through a Christian's *words*.

At this point, perhaps some of us are thinking, “Well, I'm in a job or industry where I just don't see how I can reveal Christ” or “Well, I'm not Arthur Guinness.”

If that's you, just consider the fact that Arthur Guinness worked in the *beer* industry, which is what many would relegate to being completely secular. And yet, his work was one of the primary ways that Guinness revealed Jesus in his life and in his city.

What was crucial for him to reveal Jesus was *not* the job or industry that he was in, but it was the fact that he was a *Christian*. And as soon as Christians walk into a job or industry, the *Christian* doesn't turn *secular* but the *job* turns *sacred*.

Whenever Jesus touched lepers, *he* didn't become polluted, but his touch has the effect of cleansing the *leper*. And in the same way, as representatives of Christ, as those who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us, when we enter into *toxic* work environments, deal with *unreasonable* expectations, and engage in a job that many around us either *idolize* or find *meaningless*, we ought *not* to become toxic, unreasonable idolaters or meaningless wanderers; rather, like Christ, we bring his healing touch upon the brokenness *in* our jobs, and *through* our jobs we shine his light upon the darkness in our city.

<sup>1</sup> Jordan Raynor, “Gin, Stout, and Guinness's 9,000 Year Lease,” February 15, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://www.jordanraynor.com/blog/gin-stout-and-guinness-s-9-000-year-lease>.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Raynor, “How Christians Lifted Dublin Out of the Slums,” February 22, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://www.jordanraynor.com/blog/how-christians-lifted-dublin-out-of-the-slums>.

[Two questions to ask about revealing Jesus in your work:

1. Where do I see brokenness, frustration, and hopelessness in my work?
2. How might God be calling me to participate in bringing healing and renewal to these areas in my work?]

Perhaps start by asking two simple questions: (1) where do I see brokenness, frustration, and hopelessness in my work? (2) how might God be calling me to participate in bringing healing and renewal to these areas in my work?

I know that many of us have a tendency to complain about certain aspects of our work to one another, which is essentially answering that first question: where do I see brokenness, frustration, and hopelessness in my work? We probably all already know where the brokenness lies. But we often stop there. We end with complaint.

But what if, as fellow Christians, our complaints became pathways to Christ, where we began to brainstorm and envision together answers to that second question: how might God be calling me to participate in bringing healing and renewal to these areas in my work?

That should be the difference of Christians in the workplace. We don't just complain, but our complaints lead us to find ways to reveal Christ in and through our work.

And just think about the kind of legacy that this can leave with our children and the next generation of Christians.

What's interesting about the legacy of Arthur Guinness is that most of his descendants have chosen one of three career paths. There are the "brewing Guinnesses," the "banking Guinnesses," and what some have called the "Guinnesses for God" who have worked as pastors and missionaries.

But whatever their profession—whether brewing, banking, or pastoring—following the legacy of Arthur Guinness, they understood that their work *could* be, and *should be*, done for the glory of God.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the passionate, generous, city-transforming, Christ-centered, God-glorifying work of Arthur Guinness—and by the grace of God—the majority of his descendants have continued to *represent* and *reveal* well who Jesus is to the world around them.

May that be our longing as well: not only that *we* would reveal Jesus well as individual Christians, but that we would impress such a conviction upon our children and the next generation of believers to reveal Jesus well in *all* areas of their lives—personal, family, work, church, and neighbor.

So we reveal Jesus through our lives as individual Christians, and also...

## **B. As the local church**

I want us to think about how many baptism testimonies we have heard that started with something like, "I grew up in the church, but I honestly didn't see anything different about the people in the church with the everyone else in the word, so I left the church," or "I grew up in the church, but because of how judgmental and hypocritical people in the church were, I left the church."

By God's grace, he still saved them *in spite of* their negative experiences in the church growing up, but that should not be the testimonies we long to hear. Rather, we should long to hear testimonies that begin, "I grew up in the church and I saw how distinct the people were from the rest of the world in their love and holiness that it made me want to learn more about who Christ is," or "I grew up in the church and even though it was clear that they were all sinners like me, I could also clearly see how God was changing them so that they were more and more humble, forgiving, generous, and loving people, and it made me want to learn more about who Christ is."

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<sup>3</sup> Jordan Raynor, "Brewers, Bankers, and 'Guinnesses for God,'" March 1, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://www.jordanraynor.com/blog/brewers-bankers-and-guinnesses-for-god>.

That should not sound far-fetched to us because that's the testimony that we see in Scripture. In describing the early church in Jerusalem...

Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

We see the *same* sacrificial works of love and renewal for the good of others to the glory of God that we earlier saw should characterize *every individual Christian*, but now, we see what happens when those Christians are gathered together in a *local church*. As they submit themselves to God's Word, fellowship with one another, remember Christ in "the breaking of bread" (or the Lord's Supper), and as they pray for God's will to be done, what is the effect?

They shared what they had with one another, they even sold what they had to provide for those in need, they desired to spend more time with one another "day by day" (or daily), they gained "favor with all the people" and "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

What do you think the testimonies of those being saved sounded like? I imagine they all started like, "I could not deny how loving and kind and generous these people in the church were to one another and to others around them, and it made me want to learn more about who Jesus is."

If someone wanted to know more about Jesus, where should they look? Of course, they should look at God's Word to see for themselves, but by God's design, they should also look at the *church*.

Jesus taught in...

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

In other words, when we each reveal Jesus to one another *in* the church ("As I have loved you, so you must love one another"), we reveal Jesus to the world together *as* the church ("By this everyone will know that you are my disciples").

By our *breadth* and *depth* of love for one another in the church, we long to be a Jesus-revealing—or a gospel-revealing—community.

In terms of *breadth*, our love for one another reaches and includes people who are *so* different and far apart and even were once hostile towards one another, who, apart from the power of the gospel—apart from the work of Christ in our lives—would never unite together.

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.

In terms of *depth*, Christ doesn't just bring people together to *tolerate* each other, but he makes us 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."

So now, 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.

Look around you. Recognize that everyone here is not like you. We're from different families and upbringings, different vocations and socioeconomic classes, different life stages and life experiences. We have different faces and features, different personalities and interests, different strengths and weaknesses. We're a diverse community. And that's how Christ's church *should* be because that's how God *designed* it to be. It's a *gift*. And it's a gift we have the responsibility of *stewarding* as God's people. We have the great responsibility and opportunity to reveal Jesus in our breadth and depth of love for one another.

So what does this practically mean for us? How can we reveal Jesus together as a local church?

[How can we reveal Jesus together as a local church?

1. Become a member of a church and gather regularly with your church.]

First, at a bare minimum, if you're a Christian, you should *join* a church and commit to regularly *gather* as a church. You cannot reveal Jesus together *as* a church if you're not a member of a church or if you're not regularly present *with* your church.

I know that January is the start of a new year and a time of New Year's resolutions. Perhaps some of you are coming back to church after being away for a while, and we're glad that you're here. And my exhortation to you is *not* to just come and go, or indefinitely hop between churches, but commit to be a member of a church *somewhere* (and it doesn't have to be our church) and stay there and grow there and reveal Jesus together with your church.

[How can we reveal Jesus together as a local church?

1. Become a member of a church and gather regularly with your church.
2. Know who the other members of the church are by praying through the membership directory.]

Second, we should strive to know *who* the other members of the church are and to pray for one another, which is why we have a membership directory. I encourage you to pray for a few members each day—and if they have children, please pray for them too—and systematically make your way through the whole membership.

[How can we reveal Jesus together as a local church?

1. Become a member of a church and gather regularly with your church.
2. Know who the other members of the church are by praying through the membership directory.
3. Personally sacrifice your comforts, preferences, resources, and time.]

Third, personally sacrifice your comforts, preferences, resources, and time. Everyone loves the idea of being a part of a *diverse* church of *deep* relationships, but the reality is that just as Christ laid down his life to *create* such a gospel-revealing community, we must also be willing to lay down our lives to *maintain* and *cultivate* this kind of community (Eph. 4:1-3).

Have you been a new person in a church in a while? We forget what it's like to be new or different. But these are prime opportunities that we can begin to show the love of Christ to one another, especially to those who are new or different.

Very practically, at Sunday Celebration and LIFE Group, when you see two different people you might talk to afterwards, at least half the time, walk up to the person you're less comfortable with and genuinely get to know them better. After Sunday Celebration, forego your food preferences and eat at a place where more people can afford and then invite others to join.

Also, notice what part of the body is hurting right now and see how you might be able to help in whatever way you can. It might be through opening your home, eating a meal together, listening to understand what they're going through, and praying for them. It might be through using your skills, experience, and

network to help them find a job. It might be through helping them financially for a certain need and helping them to be financially sustainable, or helping them apply for the Benevolence Fund where our church at large can help in those ways.

[How can we reveal Jesus together as a local church?

1. Become a member of a church and gather regularly with your church.
2. Know who the other members of the church are by praying through the membership directory.
3. Personally sacrifice your comforts, preferences, resources, and time.
4. Invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings and invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends.]

Fourth, invite your non-Christian friends to church gatherings and invite church members to hangouts with your non-Christian friends.

If the community of the local church is one of the greatest means to *reveal* Jesus, then one of the greatest ways we can reveal Jesus to our non-Christians friends is by exposing them to our church community.

Invite them to church gatherings so that they can see and experience the supernatural breadth and depth of love from the greatest concentration of the local church community.

If you're grabbing a meal or hanging out with your non-Christian friends, invite church members to come along with you to genuinely build friendships with them. The more members in the church that they get to know and befriend, the more opportunities they will have to see and experience Christ through the love of the community.

So how do we reveal Jesus? First, we reveal Jesus with our *lives*, and second, we reveal Jesus with our *words*.

## II. Revealing Jesus with our words

### A. Inside the church

We need to first understand that words are powerful. Words can either *build up* or *tear down*.

- With words, God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it and blessed Adam and Eve (Gen. 1).
- But with words, Satan tempted Adam and Eve to rebel and sin against God (Gen. 3).
- With words, Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead.
- But with words, the people cried out, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:13-14).
- With words, we can give hope to the hopeless and encourage the fearful.
- But with words, we can crush others' hopes and stir up their anger.
- With words, we can help the estranged and lonely feel loved and accepted.
- But with words, we can ruin relationships and destroy communities.

Words are not only powerful, but they reveal our hearts. Jesus says this in...

#### Luke 6:45 (ESV)

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

In other words, we speak out of what our heart *values* or *worships* most.

- If you value or worship *achievement* or *success*, then you will speak well of people who help you get things done, speak bad or harshly of people who hinder what you're doing, and ignore those who you feel have nothing to contribute to what you're doing.
- If you value or worship *efficiency*, then you will speak constant criticism to others about how they're not good enough or fast enough, and your lack of patience will come out in your tone.
- If you value or worship *relationships*, then you will *not* speak to people hard truths they need to hear out of fear of damaging your relationship with them.

But as fellow Christians inside the church, what *should* our speech sound like if our hearts value and worship *Jesus* above all else? It should sound like how *Jesus* speaks to us as his people.

In the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the Bible, it opens with a scene where John has a vision where he sees the risen Christ in all his glory, and John is so overwhelmed that he basically passes out (Rev. 1:17).<sup>4</sup> And after Jesus touched and comforted John, Jesus dictates to John letters to write down for seven of his churches that existed at the time. In essence, Jesus speaks to his people. And listen to how Jesus begins his first letter in...

Revelation 2:1-2a (ESV)

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

“I know your works...

Remember how John passed out in fear when he saw the risen Christ in all his glory? Imagine *you* are the recipient of this letter from Jesus. And he starts to say to you, “I know your works.” How are you feeling right now? How do you think he’d finish that sentence?

- “I know your works... and I am very *displeased* and *disappointed* with you.”
- “I know your works... and I want *nothing* to do with you.”

Jesus could rightfully crush us in how he finishes that sentence. But that’s not what he does. He says...

Revelation 2:2-3 (ESV)

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.

In essence, he *encourages* his people. He says:

- “I know your works... and I’m *pleased* with you.”
- “I know your works... and I want you to know that I’m *proud* of you.”

But that’s not the only thing Jesus has to say to them. He continues in...

Revelation 2:4-7 (ESV)

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

Jesus clearly sees both the positives *and* the negatives in his people. And he is just as *emphatic* about the negatives as he is about the positives. He speaks the *truth* to them, but he doesn’t crush them. He doesn’t reject them, but he invites them back to himself.

He’s basically saying: “You’re not right with me, but you *could* be and I *want* you to be. Repent and come back to me. If not, there will be massive consequences that I don’t want you to experience. But if you return to me, I promise that there will be immeasurable blessings that I long to give you.”

And over and over again throughout the seven letters, this is how Jesus speaks to his churches.

- He encourages them (Rev. 2:10, 24-25; 3:4, 10).
- He helps them to see where they are not right with him (Rev. 2:4, 14-15; 3:17-18).
- He warns them of what will happen if they do not repent—if they continue down this path without change (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:16).

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<sup>4</sup> The following exposition of passages from Revelation is adapted from William P. Smith, *Parenting with Words of Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 33-36, Kindle.



- And he reminds them that it's much better to be in a right relationship with him (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21).

So what should we call this kind of speech? The Bible calls this "speaking the truth in love." And if our hearts value and worship *Jesus* above all else, and if we are to reveal *Jesus* with our words, then our speech should sound like how *Jesus* speaks to us as his people. And that's exactly what we see prescribed for us as members of Christ's church.

In a passage that describes how God has designed his church to mature in Christ, it says this in...

Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)

Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The way we grow up or mature in Christ is "speaking the truth in love" to one another. And the more we "speak the truth in love" to one another, the more we resemble and reveal how Christ speaks to us.

If you've been in the church for some time, I'm sure you've probably heard and used this phrase, "speaking the truth in love," many times before, but let's unpack it a bit.

Speaking the truth is not enough. You can use the truth in a very self-centered way that's hurtful and damaging to another person because you're not doing it for that person's best interest. That's truth *devoid* of love. And if you speak the truth *without* love, it's actually no longer really the truth because it's so twisted by your own emotions and agendas that it's no longer for the good of that person.

And you can say that you're just being "authentic" or "genuine," but you're just being authentically and genuinely self-centered—more consumed with yourself rather than being consumed with Christ and loving the person in front of you.

On the other hand, some people have a semblance of "I'll be loving but I won't say the truth," so we won't say hard things to people, even though we see things that are wrong and damaging in their lives. We say nothing because we think that's the more loving, compassionate thing to just let it go. But that's obviously not true. If someone is hurting themselves or we see them about to jump off a cliff, we should do everything we can to say, "Stop!" The loving thing to do is *not* to keep our mouths shut, but to speak!

The reality is that you cannot have truth without love, and you cannot have love without truth. We need both of them at the same time to have either of them.<sup>5</sup>

As fellow Christians inside the church, the aim of speaking the truth in love is so that collectively we may mature and conform more and more into the likeness of Christ, which means that our words are aimed at intentionally helping one another to follow Christ—also known as "discipling." So in "speaking the truth in love," we're talking about cultivating a culture of *discipling*.

We're not speaking about generic truth to help each other better understand math, we're not talking about subjective opinion to help each other better conform to our preferences, but we're talking about the truth of God's Word and intentionally helping one another to understand and apply the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives.

So what might this look like?

There was a time where I began noticing some concerns in a person's life—let me call him "Bob." There were some things in Bob's life that I wanted to bring up, but I wasn't able to quite articulate it, so I sat down one morning and began to think and write down what I noticed with specific examples. But if I went to Bob with a long list—no matter how constructive the feedback is—it would feel crushing. So I started crossing some out and combining some, and I ended up with three things to bring up with him.

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<sup>5</sup> William P. Smith, *Parenting with Words of Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 115-118, Kindle.

And so, I sent Bob a message and setup a time to meet with him. And leading up to that day, I felt quite anxious. I wasn't quite sure how he might respond. And when I met with him, I told him that there are some more personal things I wanted to bring up with him. And I gave a lot of disclaimers about how I value him as a friend, how I love him, and how what I'm about to say doesn't diminish any of that but I'm saying them because I love him. And then, I began to share those three things that I have seen in his life that I felt were not aligned with the character of Christ—and how I wasn't sure if he was aware of them or not.

And he responded graciously. He thanked me for bringing these things up with him, he said that these were all legitimate things I was bringing up with him, and he apologized. But what surprised me was what he said next; he said that he was actually sad that I didn't bring these things up with him sooner. And he invited me to bring these things up with him as soon as I can next time I see them, even if I can't articulate them perfectly. And we ended that time with prayer, thanking God for our friendship and for putting each other in our lives to help each other to become more like Christ. And then we continued catching up and sharing about other personal things in our lives.

Now I'm not saying that that this is how it always looks to "speak the truth in love," but this is just one example from my own life.

Just bear in mind that "speaking the truth in love" will not always be so appreciated as in the example I just gave. Even still, that should not deter us from doing so. By God's design, the way we grow up or mature in Christ is "speaking the truth in love" to one another. And the more we "speak the truth in love" to one another, the more we resemble and reveal how Christ speaks to us.

Let me just pause to speak to those who will be on the *receiving* end of someone speaking the truth in love to you—and hopefully *because* people love us, *all* of us will be on the receiving end at some point.

Nobody likes to be corrected or rebuked, but the Bible says that we all *need* it. Still, even if *we know* this, it's not easy to have an inviting and accepting attitude whenever we're on the *receiving* end. And that's why we need to root ourselves deeply in the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

[How do we receive well "the truth in love" spoken to us?

1. We agree with God's *judgment* of us.]

As Christians, we agree with God's *judgment* of us: "No one is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10), "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Nobody has judged us more intensely, deeply, pervasively, and truly than God himself. We believe that we are totally depraved, meaning that every aspect of our life has been marred by sin. And if our faith is in the crucified Christ as our substitute, then we acknowledge that *we* deserve the judgment that Christ bore on our behalf. That means that no matter what anyone else has to say about us, it doesn't come anywhere close to what we already affirm about ourselves in the gospel—we are sinners rightfully deserving of eternal judgment.

[How do we receive "the truth in love" spoken to us?

1. We agree with God's *judgment* of us.
2. We agree with God's *justification* of us.]

But, as Christians, we also agree with God's *justification* of us: through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been justified and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1) and "[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:39). If we truly understand that, despite the judgment we deserve, we have been made right with God "by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), then no matter what anyone says to us, we have no reason to justify ourselves, but we can rest assured that "If God has justified me, then who can condemn me?" and "If God justifies me, accepts me, and will never forsake me, then why should I feel insecure and fear criticism?"

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<sup>6</sup> The following section of agreeing with God's judgment and justification of us is adapted from Alfred J. Poirier, "The Cross and Criticism," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 18-19.

The gospel of Jesus Christ enables us to humbly receive correction and rebuke, especially when it's coming from our spiritual family who are doing their best to speak the truth in love to us. And even if we're not able to receive it well right away, the gospel enables us to repent and reconcile with one another, so that we can continue to mature in resembling and revealing how Christ speaks to us.

So we reveal Jesus through our words as *inside* the church, and also...

## B. Outside the church

Earlier, in revealing Jesus through our *lives*, we talked about working for the good of others to the glory of God. And the *aim* for such good works is to point to the *greater* restoration and salvation that we all need and that Jesus provides for sinners on the cross. But the only way that "pointing" can occur is if we *speak*.

Good works are an important *part* of revealing Jesus, but they do *not* replace *speaking*. Listen to what God's Word says in...

### Romans 10:13-15 (ESV)

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

In order to be saved, one must call upon the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. But the only way that will happen is if they hear, which means someone preaches or speaks to them the gospel (or good news) of Jesus Christ. And *who* are those who speak about Jesus to them? Those who are *sent*.

Every week, we end our Sunday Celebration by being commissioned as we heard, "HMCC, you are now sent out to transform the world!" *Why* do we say that? For this very reason: as Christians, we are sent out to speak about the good news of Jesus Christ, so that others may hear and believe and be saved from their sin. That's not an "HMCC" thing, but that's a *Jesus* thing. We call it the Great Commission; Jesus says to his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Every week, as we end Sunday Celebration, we are reminded and re-commissioned to go out into the world to reveal Jesus not only with our *lives* but with our *words*.

So what might this look like?

[How can we reveal Jesus with our words outside the church?

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ.]

First, identify yourself as a follower of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

If people don't know that you're a Christian, none of your good works will ever be connected to the work of Christ. If nobody knows that you bear the name of Christ, then you're simply not revealing him to anyone.

This doesn't have to be done in a clumsy or offensive way, but you could ask co-workers how their weekend was, and when they inevitably ask *you* how your weekend was, you can talk about how you enjoyed the Sunday service at your church.

[How can we reveal Jesus with our words outside the church?

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ.
2. Pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.]

Second, pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jordan Raynor, "3 simple ways to identify yourself as a Christian today," November 15, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/3-simple-ways-to-identify-yourself-as-a-christian-today>.

<sup>8</sup> Jordan Raynor, "From the Surface, to the Serious, to the Spiritual," November 22, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/from-the-surface-to-the-serious-to-the-spiritual>.

Surface conversation would be like “How was your weekend?” And let’s say you enjoyed the Sunday service at your church. And they respond, “Oh, I used to go to church, but I haven’t gone in long while.”

Now, moving from the surface to the serious, you might say, “Oh, how come you stopped going?” And perhaps they say, “I just went because I went to a Christian school, but I haven’t really gone since then.”

Now, moving from the serious to the spiritual, you might say, “For me, the opposite actually happened. I didn’t go to church growing up, but when I was going through a difficult time in my marriage, a friend invited me, so I went. And I know it might sound strange, but it was my faith in Jesus that not only saved my marriage but saved me from constantly trying to find my acceptance in family, friends, work, and everything else.”

And perhaps your co-worker might be interested in hearing more about the gospel, or perhaps not. But at least they know that your faith in Christ makes a *practical difference* in your life and that they can go to you anytime if they ever want to hear more.

[How can we reveal Jesus with our words outside the church?

1. Identify yourself as a follower of Christ.
2. Pray that God would open doors to move from the surface, to the serious, to the spiritual.
3. Be prepared to give an answer for your hope.]

Third, be prepared to give an answer for your hope.<sup>9</sup>

Let’s say, in the previous example, your co-worker responds to you, saying, “How did your faith in Jesus do that for you?”

God’s Word says that we are to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV).

You might say, “Well, the problem was that when my wife was upset with me, I just couldn’t handle it, so I shut down and tried to escape to friends. But when I had conflict with friends, I couldn’t handle it, so I turned to work. But when work wasn’t going well, I just kept running and looking elsewhere. And it was just this endless cycle of trying to find acceptance in all the wrong things. But when I put my faith in Christ, I realized that even though I deserve God’s punishment because of my sins against him, he loves me still and sent his Son Jesus to live, die, and resurrect in my place, so that if I repent of my sin and believe in Jesus Christ, he forgives me and accepts me and will never leave me. When I had that kind of radical acceptance from God, it helped me to be able to face all the problems in my marriage rather than running away from them.”

I’m not sure how your co-worker would respond, but that’s out of your hands. Only God saves people, but we have the responsibility and privilege and joy of sharing about the good news of Jesus Christ with those around us—and we should always be prepared to share that hope with others not only with our *lives* but with our *words*.

As Christians, if we are speaking the truth in love with one another *inside* the church, then sharing the gospel with people *outside* the church is the inevitable outcome of speaking the truth in love to them. The greatest truth to be told is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the greatest love for others is to desire for them to be in heaven with us. If salvation comes by hearing and believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, how could we who are sent out by Christ remain silent?

John Bunyan was a 17<sup>th</sup> century English writer and preacher. He was converted at around the age of 30, and he began preaching the good news of Jesus Christ almost immediately. But he was later arrested and imprisoned for preaching without government approval. At any time, he could be released from prison if he just agreed to stop preaching; to be clear, they didn’t ask him to deny his faith in Christ or anything, but simply to stop preaching. But it tore his conscience to shreds at the thought of *not* preaching the gospel of

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<sup>9</sup> Jordan Raynor, “One Final Way to Prepare to Share the Gospel with Your Co-Workers,” November 29, 2021, in *The Word Before Work*, podcast, <https://jordanraynor.com/twbw/one-final-way-to-prepare-to-share-the-gospel-with-your-co-workers>.

Jesus Christ, so he could not in good conscience agree to stop preaching. And so, he stayed in prison for 12 years. All the while, he had a wife and four children 10 years old and under—the oldest of which was born blind—and they lived off of the charity of people and what Bunyan could provide for his family by making shoe laces in prison. And yet, Bunyan remained in prison for 12 years when he could have walked out in an instance if he just agreed to stop preaching.<sup>10</sup>

*That's* how much speaking about Jesus to others meant to Bunyan.

What would it be like if all of us in our church were *that* bound by our consciences and *that* compelled to speak about Jesus to others? What would it be like to have a culture of *evangelism* in our church, where it's *normal* to intentionally share the gospel to persuade others to put their trust in Jesus, and where we ask, share with, pray with, learn from, and celebrate with one another about attempting spiritual conversations with those outside the church?

Not only would we all be better *equipped* and more *emboldened* to evangelize, but more people would have the opportunity to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

So as we begin 2023 with our church theme of “Revealing Jesus,” let’s begin to think and pray about how we as individual Christians and the local church can reveal Jesus to one another and the world around us this year. And as we begin our One Desire Fast today and as we pray through our church-wide prayer topics related to “Revealing Jesus” each day over the next two weeks, may God fan into flame a burning passion to represent and reveal our Lord and Savior well with our lives and with our words.

## **Life Application**

Fast and pray for the church-wide prayer topics related to “Revealing Jesus” during the One Desire Fast ([bit.ly/ODF23prayers](https://bit.ly/ODF23prayers)).

This was announced earlier today, and you can access the prayer topics at [bit.ly/ODF23prayers](https://bit.ly/ODF23prayers).

I know that this one life application doesn’t seem to do justice to everything that we covered today, but as you fast and pray each day for the different church-wide topics during the One Desire Fast over the next couple weeks, you’ll find that everything we mentioned today are reiterated in those “Revealing Jesus” prayer topics.

And I trust that, *as* we’re fasting and praying for those topics, God will convict each of us in more pointed ways and lead us to more personal applications to “reveal Jesus” this year.

## **The One Thing**

***Let’s reveal Jesus with our lives and words as individual Christians and the local church.***

## **Conclusion**

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

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<sup>10</sup> See Leland Ryken, “Foreword,” and John Piper, “To Live Upon God Who Is Invisible: The Life of John Bunyan, in John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2014).