

Acts 5:12-26  
Go, Stand, and Speak  
2018-05-20

Equipped with the words of life, go, stand, and speak

An exercise done in my workplace this week was quite telling. As part of a training to connect employees to the company's mission and values, the question was asked of each employee, "What is your purpose? Why do you do what you do?" It was clear that there were some in the training that hadn't really considered that question, nor considered how they would answer it. Some were staring at the ceiling, hoping to find the answer there. Others looked for it on the wall, others the instructor's forehead. My difficulty was a little different. I know what my purpose is, but how would I write it, knowing it would probably be shared openly among my coworkers. *Should I make it generic and non-offensive, or should I take a stand and speak what I know my mission to be, knowing that others might be offended by it?* I thought about writing the Westminster Shorter Catechism answer #1, to glorify God and enjoy him forever. That would be moderately safe. No, the name of Jesus needs to be included. I thought about the Pillar mission statement, to glorify God by knowing Christ more fully and making Christ more fully known. That was better, but still not quite right. All the while, *the temptation to write something "safe", something non-offensive was very much present in my mind.* But I knew this was a time I needed to be bold, to stand and speak the name of Jesus, because it's through his name that life is given.

**Scripture Passage: Acts 5:12-26**

My difficulty at work was really quite minor. In our passage of study this morning we have the apostles arrested for speaking the name of Jesus. We see their boldness and obedience in speaking the name of Jesus, even when threatened and imprisoned. They had no doubt about their mission. In fact, it was given to them by an angel. **Acts 5:20** "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." **Equipped with the words of life, go, stand, and speak.**

**Speak words of life when you have the favor of the people (vv.12-16)**

1. **v.12** "Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles."
  1. This is a direct answer to prayer. **Acts 4:29-30** "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."
2. **v.14** "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women..." - 3000 on the day of Pentecost. Then the Lord added daily those who were being saved. 5000 men when Peter preached after the healing of the lame man. Now Luke says multitudes of men and women, more than ever. This is amazing, and it's nothing less than a sovereign work of God in saving these people.
  1. But I want to draw your attention to something by way of a question. What's the greater miracle, being healed of sickness or being granted eternal life? I hope you'll all agree that eternal life is the greater miracle. **Romans 10:17** "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." What must have accompanied the ministry of these healings? The ministry of gospel proclamation; speaking the words of life. This is really the greater miracle, that multitudes of people were being saved.
  2. What preceded this rapid growth? Maybe the apostles attended a church growth seminar, or adopted a seeker-sensitive ministry approach? No, Luke records "*more than ever believers were added to the Lord*" right after the case of Ananias and Sapphira coming under the Lord's judgment. Ananias and Sapphira brought this spiritual attack upon the church from within, seeking to compromise the holiness of the church. God, in his grace, worked to restore the holiness of the church. Just prior to this was the first wave of persecution by the Jewish authorities. No wonder we have **v.13** recorded. All of the people had great respect for these believers, but not all the people were willing to join their ranks. They knew the cost of discipleship was great, and many weren't willing to pay it. But the Lord still worked to save. It's his church, and he has promised to build it.
    1. **Matthew 16:16-18** "Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Peter had it right. He stood and spoke rightly among his peers about the identity of Jesus. This is why Peter is so prominent in these early chapters of Acts, because through his life and testimony Jesus would work to build his church. What was Peter's part? **Faithfulness to the message. It's the same part we're given today. To be faithful to the message entrusted to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:4** "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." **To live lives of integrity, of holiness, and to be bold in proclaiming the life-giving and soul-saving gospel.**

3. **v.15** “so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.”
  1. **Matthew 9:20–21** “And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.”” **Matthew 14:35–36** “And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.”
  2. These were amazing works of Jesus to heal the sick. They only needed to touch his clothes. But with Peter, they only needed his shadow to fall on them. This, though, is actually right in line with what Jesus spoke would take place. **John 14:12** “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”
4. **v.16** “The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem...and they were all healed.” - The fame of the apostles and the early church was spreading. The name of Jesus was being proclaimed, and the fragrance of life was in the air.

**Transition:** But, what is the fragrance of life to some is the fragrance of death to others. And here we see a group that the apostles didn't have the favor of.

### Speak words of life when you don't have the favor of the people (vv.17-26)

1. **vv.17-18** “But the high priest rose up...and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.” - Multitudes of men and women, more than ever were being added to the Lord. The church is growing rapidly, and their influence is even spreading beyond the city of Jerusalem to the surrounding towns. But, again, there is a spiritual attack.
  1. **2 Corinthians 2:14–16** “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?” What is a fragrance of life to many is a fragrance of death to the religious leaders in Jerusalem.
  2. Notice what **v.17** says they were filled with. Jealousy. We've seen the believers on numerous occasions filled with the Holy Spirit and performing selfless and life-giving acts of service. We've seen Ananias and Sapphira who had their hearts filled with lies by Satan (**5:3**). Now we see the religious leaders filled with jealousy. **James 3:16** “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.” What are you taking in? What are you being filled with? What will come spilling out from you when life is disrupted? What flows out of you in the normal course of life? Fruits of the Spirit? Works of the flesh? **Galatians 5:19–23** “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”
2. **v.19** “But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors...” - It's ironic that the Sadducees don't believe in angels, but an angel frees the apostles from the prison. But the angel also is a divine messenger, and brings the apostles a command from the Lord.
3. **v.20** “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” - They're given these imperative commands. Go and stand and speak. They weren't told to join a witness protection program, to lay low while the authorities cooled down. They're told to go right back to the middle of the fight and continue doing what landed them in prison to begin with.
  1. They were to speak the words of this Life. At the heart of the Christian message is life - life eternal. **John 6:67–69** “So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”” **John 14:6** “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
  2. They were being freed from prison. What would they do? What would they show to be their priority? What would come through their words and actions as that which they most valued? Would they hide away and retreat? Would they obey the high priest and his demands to stop speaking in the name of Jesus? Or would they obey God? What would you do? Have you ever been confronted with a decision like this, having someone tell you to do something contrary to what God would require of you? Do you obey God, or do you obey man? When a human authority requires you to do something God forbids, who do you obey? When a human authority forbids you to do something God requires, what do you do? This is where one's priorities, and what one values, begins to become clear.

4. **v.21** *“And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.”* - The apostles show a quick obedience. At first light they're at the temple again, the very place they were teaching in the name of Jesus and earning the disfavor of the religious leaders. Daybreak would have been a busy time at the temple. They didn't go early to avoid the crowds, but because this would be rush hour at the temple and there would be multitudes of people to hear as they proclaimed the gospel.
5. **vv.21b-25** I hope you can see some humor in this. The religious elites join together, they all take their places and are ready for their prisoners to be brought to them. They wait patiently. I would expect there might be some delay. The prison guards probably begin searching other prison cells frantically. Finally they come to the conclusion that there's nothing else to do but report to the Sanhedrin that there are no prisoners.
  1. **v.24** The captain of the temple and the chief priests are greatly perplexed. Perhaps there are even memories of the empty tomb of Jesus. Now the followers of Jesus have performed some disappearing act, with the assistance of an angel, which the Sadducees don't even believe in.
  2. **v.25** Then word finally comes to them. The prisoners have been found! What a relief! Where are they? Were they transferred to another cell without informing the captain of the temple? No! They're standing in the temple and teaching the people. They're right back where they were before, and doing what they were arrested for. This was the front yard of the chief priest. This was ground zero of his authority and oversight. This man who was supposed to have all of this power and authority, yet he failed to oversee what he was entrusted with.
6. **v.26** The temple police are dispatched to go and re-arrest the apostles. But notice that they did so without force. This is interesting from two sides.
  1. First, the most obvious, is from the side of the temple police. It says they were afraid of being stoned by the people. They operated out of fear of man. They knew the apostles were popular with the people, and a show of force might cause an uprising and revolt against the temple police and the Sanhedrin. The ones that were supposed to be leaders were actually failing to lead because they failed to consider what was right in the sight of God. They acted only out of pragmatism and ease.
  2. Second, though, is the side of the apostles. They were rearrested, and no force was required. The temple police asked them to come with them, and they complied. They didn't flee, they didn't fight, they didn't protest and try to get the people in an uproar. They went along willingly back to the human authorities. They were willing to obey God, and they willingly accepted the consequences for their civil disobedience. **I think this could be a very helpful Community Group discussion this week.**

**Conclusion:** So what did I write in answer to the question about my purpose, about why I do what I do? *“To glorify God by loving others around me with the love of Jesus.”* And, unsurprisingly, the first thing we did was break into groups to share with each other what we wrote. The Lord gave me an opportunity to share with my co-workers on that day, and to give them a greater understanding of who I am and why I do what I do. A door was opened for the gospel, and I'm grateful that the Lord granted boldness to stand and speak the name of Jesus. I'm looking forward to more opportunities that will build from this, and to continue to speak with boldness. Be faithful to what we've been entrusted with, and speak words of life regardless of your audience. We have been given the words of this Life, of eternal life, so let us go and stand and speak.

**Matthew 28:18–20** *“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.””*

# Family

## Table Talk



May 20, 2018

### Family Discussion

1. Have you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, responded in faith, and received salvation and eternal life in Him? What would (or will) be the result of your life if you had not (or have not) believed in Jesus Christ?
2. Before even the consideration of what would happen if you hadn't believed, also consider how and by whom you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. What state would you be in if you had never heard?
3. Have you ever been the one who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to someone? What things keep you from doing what our key verse commands?
4. Whenever you are given the opportunity to share Jesus Christ with someone, consider what Jesus has done for you and the hopeless and perishing state you were in before the words of Life were spoken to you; that same state is also true of the unbeliever you face. No matter how happy or content the unbeliever seems, or how miserable, without faith in Jesus Christ, they are perishing. Be faithful, be bold, be obedient to speak the Word of Life!

### GOD'S TRUTH

Equipped with the words of Life, go, stand, and speak!

#### Key Verse

"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."  
Acts 5:20 (ESV)

#### TABLE READING



Lead your kids into God's Word...

1. Romans 10:9-13
2. Romans 10:14, 17
3. Acts 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:4
4. Acts 5:21; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; John 14:6; 2 Timothy 1:8-10

**Scripture Memory: Acts 5:42**

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)