

Week 3

I'M ALL IN

Introductory Talking Points

Notes

- We are on our third Sunday of Build Relationships/Share Jesus studies in our Life Group.
- This afternoon at 5:00 p.m. we will be going out on our Build Relationships/Share Jesus visits.
- Next Sunday, August 26, we will participate in Bellevue Loves Memphis projects during the afternoon and early evening. This particular Bellevue Loves Memphis Workday will provide Life Groups with opportunities to Build Relationships and Share Jesus. Life Groups will have three options: (*Teacher, at this point, you may want to explain what your Life Group will be doing.*)
 - **Build Relationships/Share Jesus visits.** Those who would like to continue to make Share Jesus visits will meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please register at <http://www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org> so that we can make sure to have enough bags prepared.
 - **Plan Your Own Event.** Your Life Group can plan your own event where you strategically reach out to neighbors to build relationships and share Jesus with them. Bellevue will help provide materials and supplies for each of these events. Contact the Missions Office for more information at 901-347-5530 or rmcgregor@bellevue.org.
 - **Participate in a BLM Partner Project.** See a full list of projects at www.bellevuelovesmemphis.org.

I want to continue to emphasize that Share Jesus is one-fourth of who we are as a church.

The four measures for Share Jesus (*by this time, class members can probably say this with you*) are:

- I am prepared to share the gospel.
- I am proactively developing relationships with lost people.
- I am engaged in local witnessing opportunities.
- I am taking the gospel to the nations.

We live these truths out, not just because our church has embraced them, but because they are New Testament principles of life and truth.

I'm All In

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“Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn’t just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!” (1 Corinthians 9:19-23, MSG)

Steve Farrar in his book, *Finishing Strong*, tells a fascinating story about the lasting impact of building a relationship, touching a life:

In the late 1800’s, a distinguished member of the British Parliament traveled to Scotland to give a speech. On the way, his carriage became hopelessly mired in the thick mud of a rural road. A young Scottish farm boy suddenly appeared on the scene with a team of large draft horses. He quickly had the carriage out of its dilemma and ready to resume the journey.

The gentleman insisted on paying the young man, but the lad refused. He was simply being a good neighbor—and neighbors help each other out when there is difficulty.

The English lawmaker was immediately taken with the young man and his attitude. “Are you sure I can’t pay you for your time and effort?” the gentleman asked.

“Thank you, sir, but it was the least that I could do. It was a privilege to help such an important person as yourself,” the boy replied.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” asked the man.

“I’d like to be a doctor, but I doubt that it will happen since my family does not have the money for such an education.”

“Then I will help you become a doctor,” said the politician.

And as the years went by, the member of Parliament kept his promise.

Nearly fifty years later, another famous English statesman lay dangerously close to death due to pneumonia. Winston Churchill had become ill while attending a wartime conference, and England desperately needed his leadership as Hitler threatened to destroy their nation.

Churchill miraculously recovered because his physician gave him an injection of a new wonder drug called penicillin. Penicillin had recently been discovered by the brilliant medical doctor, Alexander Fleming.

Alexander Fleming was the young boy who had pulled the stalled carriage from the mud. And the man who promised to return the favor by sending him to medical school was Winston Churchill’s father, Sir Randolph Churchill.

And by saving the life of Winston Churchill, indeed, he may have saved all of England.

Such is the impact of building a relationship, touching a life. Before we go further, let’s provide a biblical framework for our study.

First, God has commanded us to love people. That’s where the Love People of our Vision Frame statement comes from, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Loving people is a pre-requisite to Building Relationships.

Second, He has also commanded us to Share Jesus and Make Disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

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Okay, let's talk about that. It is sometimes difficult for people to Build Relationships and to Share Jesus. We could all testify to that. However, what do you believe is the core reason for the difficulty in embracing Build Relationships/Share Jesus?

The main barrier that stands in the way of building relationships and sharing Jesus is usually our self-centeredness. We think, "Does this person want to talk to **me**? What if they don't talk back to **me**? What if they give **me** the cold shoulder? If I talk with this person about the gospel, what will they think about **me**? Will they like or respect **me** less? Will they think I am some religious fanatic? What if someone asks **me** some question I don't know? Will I look foolish?"

Jesus addresses the person in this prison of self-centeredness. "Then he (Jesus) said to the crowd, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it'" (Luke 9:23-24, NLT). In other words, the way to gain a godly (Jesus type of) life is to give up a self-centered life!

Winston Churchill's father laid down his life (in this particular instance, his money) for Alexander Fleming. In doing so, he gained his life; his son lived. He had no idea that his giving would result in such an extraordinary return. He simply gave from a place of selfless abandon and we must do the same.

When we lay down our lives, building relationships and sharing Jesus with lost people, we find or save our lives.

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Can you think of a time when you have reached out to others and by doing so your life was changed? Maybe it was a family member, someone at work, a neighbor, or a homeless person? Maybe the person you built a relationship with or shared Jesus with was someone that you didn't have anything in common with—but you built a relationship with someone, and in the act of reaching them, God reached out to you and your life was changed. Who has an example to share?

One thing is certain, to build relationships and share Jesus, you have to be All In.

Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 9 as we look at *I'm All In*.

First, let's look at **The Attitude of an All In Person.**

Follow in your Bible with me as we read the first seven verses.

The Apostle Paul was a living demonstration of Jesus' words about losing or saving your life. In his letter to the Corinthian church, he let his readers know that Christlikeness, spiritual maturity, is not holding onto your life, your rights, but sharing your life. As an apostle, Paul had the right to certain things. According to the Lord's command that a worker is deserving of his wages (Luke 10:7), Paul could expect church support. Look at verses 4 and 6:

- "Do we not have a right to eat and drink?" (vs 4)
- "Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?" (vs 6)

Paul also had the freedom to have a wife and have her be with him.

- "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" (vs 5)

However, Paul explains that his life is not centered on his rights, but his responsibility. Skip down to verse 19. Paul writes, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more" (1 Corinthians 9:19). Paul had rights, but he lived with a higher purpose—to win people to Jesus.

As Americans, we celebrate courage, the person who lays down his or her life for another. From hearts often moved to tears, we honor those brave men and women who ran into the World Trade Center on 9/11 as well as those who put their lives on the line for us every day, at home and abroad. However, in these verses, Paul highlights a different kind of courage, not the kind that lays down life in regards to physical death, but the kind that dies to itself in a mental and emotional way. That is what Paul is saying in verse 19. It's one thing to die a physical death; it is another to purposefully subjugate yourself to a living slavery. Paul has chosen to abandon any thought of himself in favor of winning others to Christ.

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Why does Paul have this attitude that the world does not revolve around him? (You can go to passages such as 1 Corinthians 3:4-7; 3:10-15; 4:1-5; and 6:20 for verses that address Paul's heart and motive.)

Second, let's look at **The Actions of an All In Person**. Let's begin with verse 19 again and read through verse 23.

I love the way Eugene Peterson communicates Paul's lifestyle regarding his rights and responsibilities in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

"Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!" (MSG)

Catch the action in the words:

"Become a servant . . . I entered their world . . . I've become just about every sort of servant there is . . . I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!"

Paul was an "all in" type of man. What does it take for us to follow his lead? I can tell you one thing for sure—we will have to get out of our comfort zone!

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What does "get out of your comfort zone" mean to you? How can we "get out of our comfort zone" to Build Relationships/Share Jesus? (Possible answers include: learning to talk to strangers, knocking on someone's door with the hope and intent of having a gospel conversation, offering to pray with a stranger, being willing to be rejected, starting a conversation about Jesus that you might not have every answer for every question, and possibly finding yourself in a situation

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[glory to God] where you might pray with someone to receive Christ.)

Let's look at the nuts and bolts on going "all in" and "getting out of your comfort zone" to Build Relationships/Share Jesus. We have been working on one tool to use, the Share Jesus Gospel Outline.

Sharing the Gospel Outline

To help us be prepared to share not only our lives, but the gospel, let's take a few minutes and go over the Share Jesus Gospel Outline with one another. As you remember from our time last week, there are some things that are so important that we really want to be able to share them from our heart, without a cheat sheet. What kind of things? Your wife's birthday (the date, not the year—she'll share that if she wants), the names of your grandchildren (you may have 10 of them, but you really need to know each of their names), your social security number, and your phone number. You may not be able to do that with the gospel outline today, but let me encourage you to make that a goal. Get a partner and go over the outline. *(Teacher, you may want to model this for them, letting them see the dynamic of a gospel presentation.)*

Another powerful tool that we have in sharing the gospel is our testimony. It's one thing for a person to disagree with the facts of the gospel; it's another thing to disagree with a changed life.

Sharing Your Testimony

I am passing out a hand out called Sharing Your Testimony. It has four sections. It's an easy way to organize your thoughts and share with a person exactly how you came to know Christ. You need to be able to share your testimony quickly, in 4 minutes—perhaps less. Let me model this for you. *(Share your testimony or get someone else who has prepared using the outline to share their testimony.)* You can follow on the outline and hopefully; you'll hear me cover all four points (without saying point one, point two, etc.). Now, take this handout home and use it as an outline to develop your own short testimony. What we need to know is, God wants to tell His story through us! He will communicate His story, the story of His grace, hope,

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and truth. However, we need to be prepared to open our mouths. Let me share two ways to help us Build Relationships and Share Jesus:

First, pray for people before or as you are meeting them. Whisper a prayer for wisdom, for God to help you be sensitive to Him and to them. As you do that, God will communicate His presence to you and you will value the person more. You will be thinking about God, them, and then yourself—always the right order of things. God will often turn a regular appointment into a divine appointment.

Second, realize that everyone you meet is a heart-beat from an eternity in Heaven or Hell. They may become closer to becoming a Christian through a conversation with you. They may become a Christian through a conversation with you. If you share the truth in love (even if you don't do it perfectly—which no one does), they will not become any "more lost."

Conclusion

This afternoon at 5:00 we are going to meet in the Fellowship Hall, pair up in groups of two or three and make Share Jesus visits.

We are going to pass out gifts bags, seek to engage folks in a gospel conversation, invite them to Bellevue, and perhaps pray with them or share the gospel with them.

However, for those things to happen you have to be ALL IN!

In the nineteenth century, a one-legged schoolteacher from Scotland named George Scott approached Hudson Taylor offering himself for missionary service to China through the missionary agency Hudson had founded, The China Inland Mission. Taylor asked him, "With only one leg, why do you think of going as a missionary?" Scott replied, "Because I do not see those with two legs going." Scott was accepted and he planted one of the fastest growing churches in China in his 22 years of service there.

George Scott had an excuse. However, he didn't live in excuses, but in faith and obedience. He was ALL IN!

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I'm hoping, praying, and believing that I'll see you all this afternoon, 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

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Additional Questions

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How do you proactively develop relationships with lost people?
What does that mean? Can you think of accounts in the Gospels where Jesus developed relationships with lost people?

Can you share examples of people you have developed relationships with who you saw come to Christ?

How difficult is it to develop relationships with lost people?
What does it cost you?

For further study, see how Jesus befriended Zacchaeus (Luke 19).

What are practical steps you can take to develop relationships with lost people?

- Pray for opportunities
- Learn the names of people you regularly encounter (especially if you go to certain restaurants, cleaners, etc.)
- Learn what interests them and talk about it
- Pray for them
- Spend time with them
- Invite them to your home
- Share a meal with them
- Allow them to help you with something

Illustrations

Jesus Friend of Sinners is a song sung by Casting Crowns. The words are especially gripping, given our topic today.

*Jesus, friend of sinners, we have strayed so far away
We cut down people in your name
But the sword was never ours to swing*

*Jesus, friend of sinners, the truth's become so hard to see
The world is on their way to You, but they're tripping over me
Always looking around, but never looking up, I'm so double-minded
A plank eyed saint with dirty hands and a heart divided.*

*Jesus, friend of sinners, the one who's writing in the sand
Made the righteous turn away and the stones fall from their hands.*

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*Help us to remember we are all the least of these
Let the memory of Your mercy bring Your people to their knees
Nobody knows what we're for only what we're against when we
judge the wounded,
What if we put down our signs crossed over the lines and loved
like You did?*

Chorus

*Oh Jesus, friend of sinners
Open our eyes to the world at the end of our pointing fingers
Let our hearts be led by mercy
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors*

*Oh, Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks
yours.
You love every lost cause; you reach for the outcast
For the leper and the lame; they're the reason that You came
Lord I was that lost cause and I was the outcast
But you died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at Your
feet.*

“Jesus, Friend of Sinners” was written by Mark Hall and Matthew West

A great book that addresses how to build relationships and share Jesus with those in your circle of friends and family is *Concentric Circles of Concern* by Oscar Thompson.