



GO FISH 5 – THE ‘MESSAGE AND THE MESSENGER’

Over recent weeks we have spoken about sharing our faith, why it needs to be **spoken**. We have seen the boldness and **courage** of the early believers as they declared Jesus as the only way to be saved, and this controversial news sparked adversity and **opposition**. But they saw something else even more remarkable that God would use what appeared to be failure to achieve his purposes – he was sovereign...so they prayed bring it on, give us increases courage to be bold. Last Sunday we looked at what it meant to have fishing **partners**, the Holy Spirit to nudge and prompt us and one another as living examples of community that will attract people to faith...remember I spoke about partnering together to catch big fish... here's my contribution to that.

Today I want to give you the **most simple way of sharing your faith** in terms of what to say with someone. (content - message)...and I also want to give some input on you as 'carrier' (messenger) – how not to get in the road of the message.

THE MESSAGE - CONTENT

Fishing is simple....there are just two basic components you need to have....lure or bait and a line or retrieval mechanism... yes I know also about bite times, and tides and the moon, I know about nylon versus fibre thread, soft baits versus pilchards and so on....but you need two things...something to **attract** the fish and hook it and a way to **retrieve** it out of water.

When we talk about sharing our faith and pointing people to Christ, there is a lot of confusion about what you need to know and do...

Many people misunderstand what it means to be a follower of Jesus and reject it because they get the wrong message. Preachers complicate it too much.... with too many add-ons. You've got all these flavours of church all saying different things...looking different, teaching different things, each with their own hobby horse theology....how has that happened when it is so simple? How could we get the message so wrong and complicated!

No matter what country, culture, everybody gets in the same way.

No matter what language, age, background, education, social status, gender, it makes no difference...it is the same for all.

So what we need to do is have a very simple way to describe what becoming a Christian is and how to do it....so you can simply explain it....that's what I want to do today in the first part of this message. Tell you what you need to know and do...to become a follower of Jesus and to lead someone else to him. It is so simple you just cannot get it wrong.

Becoming a Christian is not about attending church, straightening up....or getting your life in order, neither is it praying a prayer, neither do you become a Christian by committing yourself to God, ...all these are religious jargonisms – that mean different things to different people.... **I'm going to take the most well known verse in the Bible John 3.16** and explain what people need to know and do. In just four words there is the answer.

John 3.16 Two things to know , two things to do.

So what do we need to KNOW?

1.God so loved the world – Know that God loves you.

God loves – why does he love you? - because you reflect his image. What do you think of when you think of God? Policeman or a loving Father? Amazing how many people don't get past this first truth...they feel unlovable, that their life choices make them unfit for God and they feel a discard. When you read the stories of Jesus encounter with people what strikes you about who he went after?... the failures, discards, sick, weak, lepers, prostitutes, embezzlers, those on highways and byways of life...he went after the colourful people!!! God loves, he has no problem with your life...or your choices.... he can deal with that. The amazing thing is he looks at you and sees the ***imago dei*** in you. And he loves you into discovering who and what you are to be...that's the first

thing you need to know...there one more thing to know. You are loved, and it is who you are loved by that is amazing!

2. That he gave his one and only Son. – God gave his son. This is the proof of his love....that's all you have to know to become a Christian. This is how much he so desires to want to connect with your life that he would exchange your life for the life of his Son Jesus. This describes the kind and depth of love he loves you with it is a sacrificial and self giving love that costs him dearly. Those two things **are all you need to know....God loves you, God gave for you.**

So what do we need to DO?

3. So whoever believes in Him...shall not perish.... whoever – that's you! Remember the story of the Jailer in *Acts 16:31* 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your family'. Its a positive statement not a negative one...an affirming of who Jesus is and what he has done. Peter said 'You are the Christ the Son of the living God'...upon this I will build my church said Jesus.

Now believe is a verb.... you believe in something that you know to be true. The Greek word actually means to '**place your trust in**' **Illus Stool** - ' the stool is the best example of belief....You can say you believe in that stool... but you need to **sit on stool**....put all your weight on the stool....don't sit on half the stool.! Believing is not about making a promise to God its **about receiving his promise to you**. Its about you doing something that demonstrates your faith in what God says is true.

4. But have everlasting Life. – we have it, **receive it**.... **take it for ourselves**. Eternal life is not about living forever...everybody lives forever somewhere.... Everybody wonders what happens to them when they die... we know what happens...most of us have already seen what happens... we get put into a box and some make up get applied to us...and we are buried or cremated. But we know there is more. When you see a dead body of a loved one....you know there not there, they are gone, we know there is more. You are given the life of Christ when you believe and receive Christ – and the proof of this is the resurrection of Jesus....he is the prototype of what will happen to you. You will be raised to life...but here's the great news – its already started. This new life in you is growing from the inside out. You are on your way!

God loved, God gave, We believe, We receive (have). THATS IT – THE GOSPEL!
If its that simple why do have all this Bible?

Read Leviticus – you be thinking you need to adjust your diet, certain foods
Read Gospels, why did they get together and get their versions in sync
Read Paul – hard to understand him, especially some of cultural stuff
Read OT – You get caught up in all the laws,
Read Prophets – its all about doing justice and righting wrongs
Read Revelation – and its all picture imagery about end of world
But you know **all these are not the essential message of the bible** they are the wrappings of its message....to point to just one thing. So what is that one thing? - God loves....God gave...we simply believe and receive.

So what happens when you share this with somebody and they don't want it?
You might share this with someone and they might go....actually I don't believe that...that's OK – but when they reject the message at least they reject the real truth...

Remember the **parable of the sower** teaches that there is nothing wrong with the seed nor the sower...but 75% fails to respond for various reasons. **Its simple.....**If people don't accept – that's fine – but make it simple for them. The message or the content is simple – two things to know, two things to do. Now the second part – how do we as messengers get out of the road, so we don't muddy the message!!!

THE MESSENGER Part 2 of message today....

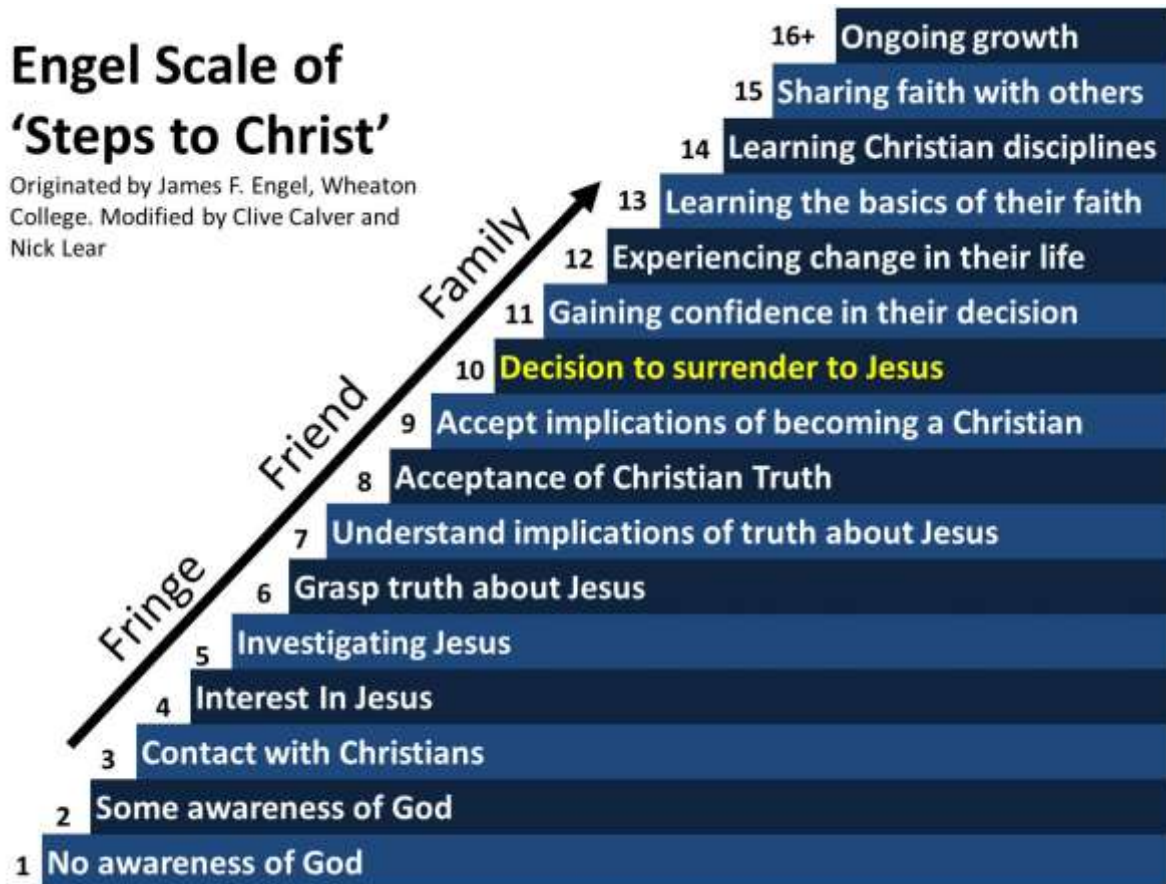
We could not do a series on sharing of your faith without at least acknowledging that being a carrier of this good news is difficult because **We get in the road...**or put more bluntly – God has some weird people in his family. Many times people almost need to say – stop it...! You are spoiling the message by being you. Your being pushy or obnoxious, you are majoring on minors, your being judgemental, hypocritical...or any number of things they are sensing or feeling when you are trying your best to share your faith with them....because what is happening is the messenger is getting in the road of the message.

Here some simple steps to avoid this happening...maybe you will see yourself somewhere in this list.

1. **Know that people are on a journey** towards faith and you might be just one part of it.
- 2.

Engel Scale of 'Steps to Christ'

Originated by James F. Engel, Wheaton College. Modified by Clive Calver and Nick Lear



3. **Build some rapport with people** before you launch into your 'you need to get saved speech'...show interest in them, respect their journey, ask questions...is the best way.
4. **Look out for a key connection points** where you can bring faith based discussion naturally, not about you unloading onto them.
5. **Listen to what they are saying** before you open your mouth.
6. **Share only what part of your story is appropriate**, at the time on the occasion. Leave them wanting to talk more with you.
7. **Don't be afraid to admit you don't know** answers. Be real
8. **Keep your discussion centred on Jesus** and what he has done
9. **Don't try to force to a closure** or 'sale' before the time is ready
10. **See your meeting with this person as a 'link in the chain'** not the end
11. **Listen the Holy Spirit** and follow his prompting

A lot of it is common sense...it found in a little poem I wrote this week.

Use the right lure like you have been taught, pull in the fish only when truly caught!

The **message is simple** – four things...2 to know 2 to do.

The **messenger is you** – filled with Holy Spirit, boldly looking for those opportunities to share this great message with people God brings you alongside.

Well meaning people, have done much damage trying to share this message – because they try to **ram down people's throats** bible verses, or **convey the anger** of God, they put upon others their own **baggage**...and they are miles away from the **simplicity of the core message** ...you might have been on the end of receiving something like this some time. Here's something I found really helpful...that sets a kind of personal honesty around sharing your faith...entitled 'When I say I am a Christian'.

When I say I am a Christian, I'm not saying I'm clean, I'm whispering, I was lost but am found and forgiven.

When I say I am a Christian, I don't speak of this with pride, I'm confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say I am Christian, I'm not trying to be strong, I'm professing that I'm weak and need his strength to carry on.

When I say I am a Christian I'm not bragging of success, I'm admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

When I say I am a Christian I'm not claiming to be perfect, my flaws are far too visible but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say that I am a Christian, I still feel the sting of pain, I have my share of heartaches, so I call upon His Name.

When I say I am a Christian, I'm not holier than Thou, I'm just a simple sinner who has received Gods good grace somehow.

I am a sinner

I am equal

I am frail

I am forgiven

I am on a journey

I have challenges

I am grateful

Message is simple 2 things to know, 2 things to do

Messenger is YOU telling your story of encountering Jesus.