



***Theme: Becoming Better and Not Bitter***  
***"By Sharing the Good News"***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, August 9-10, 2025, at Summit Church, Durango

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***18-20 "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." – Matthew 28:18-20 (The Message)***

**VIDEO                      Sermon Starter**

**SLIDE                      "Sharing the Good News"**

Have you ever gotten good news that just made you smile? Have you ever received good news that took your breath away? Have you ever received good news that changed your life? I think of people who had an illness and then found healing and a new lease on life. I think of those moments when we have a child, and we realize that everything is going to be different. I'm doing quite a few weddings this summer and I love hearing people's stories of how they got engaged and the good news of being able to share that with others. I think of several people I

have visited with just these past few weeks who are getting baptized and how excited they are for this new thing as they go into the water and become a part of God's family in front of everyone else.

What we know is that good news changes us and it takes us from being better to being bitter. Research indicates that most people prefer to receive bad news before good news when faced with a combination of both. This preference is often attributed to the "negativity bias," where negative information tends to be more impactful and memorable than positive information. Hearing bad news first can reduce the worry and anticipation associated with it, allowing individuals to better appreciate the good news that follows.

The same study shows that most recipients of good and bad news prefer to hear the bad news first, if only because that reduces the worry factor: If I know bad news is coming, I'll dwell on that — and be less likely to take it seriously or pay much attention to the good news. Maybe that's because we tend to prefer stories with happy endings. No research is necessary to confirm that statement.

Another reason research found that people wanted to hear the bad news first was because we prefer to be given possible solutions. Here's one example from *Inc. Magazine*.

***"I have good news and bad news. The bad news is the drivers got delayed and the shipment is going to be late. The good news is the job is finished, the trailers are loaded, the paperwork is complete, and we've worked out new arrangements with the warehouse. We're going to send two trailers directly to their distribution facility in Pennsylvania so they can fulfill orders from there. While that will cost us a little more, it keeps the customer's schedule intact."***

Granted, you could have gone the 1) good news, 2) bad news, 3) solution route and maybe gotten to a similar place. But getting the bad news out of the way shifts the focus permanently to the good

news, and then immediately to the potential solution. And if you don't have a potential solution, that's okay: You've still teed up the recipient to weigh in, ask questions, and make an informed decision.

The next time you're tempted to lead with the good news, take a page from the emotional intelligence playbook, put yourself in the recipient's shoes, and deliver the bad news first. While that might, for a few moments, feel less comfortable, the overall outcome will likely be better. The conclusion was that sharing good news changed people's perspectives and helped them see solutions which led them to something better, instead of dwelling on the bitter.

Today, we continue in this series where we're learning habits and practices that can help us moved toward something better instead of dwelling on the bitter. We all have things happen to us that we have no control over that gives us a choice about whether we want to get better or get better about those circumstances. Sometimes, we do those things which caused negative outcomes in our lives and we can start a spiral if we continue to focus on the bitter. We've looked at 3 practices so far and today we add a 4<sup>th</sup> and next week we will look at a 5<sup>th</sup> practice. Every one of these is found in the scriptures and practiced and modeled by Jesus.

#### **SLIDE                      Worship and Prayer**

Worship and prayer help us see the bigger picture and realize it's not about us but it's about God. When we put God 1st instead of our problems or our circumstances, it changes everything. Prayer gives us a relationship with the one who made us to love us and instead of feeling beat up by life, we recognize that God is with us even in the most difficult moments.

#### **SLIDE                      Being Curious and Asking Questions**

We learned that Jesus asked more than 300 questions during his public ministry that we find in the gospels and it's a practice that if we will learn can change us from feeling bitter to finding better solutions

and learning new things which make us better. When we talk and cast judgment instead of being curious and asking questions, we go down a bitter road that causes stress and anxiety and pain.

### **SLIDE                      Getting Outside of Yourself**

Last week we talked about getting gooey or getting outside of ourselves, by not demanding that we have our own way but instead by giving ourselves away. Getting outside of ourselves helps us see the world differently. Today we are going to talk about something which involves all three of the practices that we have already focused on because we must do all of these if we are going to share the good news.

### **SLIDE                      Sharing in Good News**

This idea of sharing the good news can sometimes make us a bit uncomfortable, especially when we use the dreaded word evangelism. This is the word that defines this habit that can make our lives better and not be bitter because it involves all three of the things we've talked about already which is prayer and worship, being curious about others and their journey and asking questions, getting outside of ourselves so we can serve and care for others, and that enables us to share the good news.

We all have different images that pop up in our heads when we talk about our evangelism. Some of us think of the street corner preacher with a megaphone. Some of us think of people holding picket signs. Some of us think about slick television preachers trying to convince us that if we send them money it will guarantee our eternal salvation.

I was over at the Parsonage next door to the church which is where I lived for a while, and I found several tracts that were left by people going door to door asking in big bold letters, ***“If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure where you would spend eternity?”***

## **GRAPHIC**

### **Do You Know for Sure tracts**

It has these scary images of what looks like the end times And three crosses and signs pointing to hope and despair and it made me worried! Is this what evangelism is all about? Is this the best way to share the good news? Is this what Jesus asks of us? These sorts of experiences make us afraid of the word evangelism, but I want to reclaim the word today and help us not to be afraid because this word is a great word. It comes from the ancient Greek.

## **SLIDE**

### **Evangelism = Euangelion = “Good News/Story”**

Euangelion was the earliest word to describe the gospels. It literally means, “good news,” or “good story.” The idea is that we are meant to share good news and good stories and it's powerful, just like we learned about from research that's been done over the past 20 years, to hear this good news after the bad news which sometimes can make us better and feel overwhelmed. We need this good news of what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross so that we can move away from bitterness and towards this better life that God wants for us.

The last thing that Jesus does before he ascends to heaven is give a commissioning and a commandment to those who follow him to share this good news because it changes everything. We are meant to share good stories and to share our faith with the world around us because we live in a world that desperately needs good news. What we find when we have the courage to share our faith is that we have power and we live into the idea that following Jesus makes us better and takes us out of bitterness and unforgiveness.

I found another study done in the UK that was looking at this similar idea that we opened this sermon with, the effect of good news in the midst of all the stories of bad news in the world. It was one of the largest research studies done on this idea in the world and they used two test groups. One test group was exposed to negative news stories only. After being exposed to those negative news stories, their

emotional, psychological, and spiritual state was measured. They even asked people about their understanding of God after reading the negative news stories. The second test group received the exact same negative news stories, but they were followed by a positive news story. They also were asked about their understanding of God after they were exposed to both types of stories. This was their conclusion.

***The groups that were shown negative news stories, followed by positive news stories, fared far better than people who are only shown negative news stories. They reported less decline in mood and instead felt uplifted. They also had more positive views of humanity and of God.***

It probably does not surprise us too much that hearing good news did great things for people's mental, psychological, emotional, and spiritual health. They also looked at which kind of positive good news story had the most impact. They varied the positive news stories on the back end of the study where they had some human interest stories of kindness and compassion, as well as expected stories that were silly ones like cat videos or bad dad jokes Or blooper reels from family vacations. Which stories do you think were most impactful to counteract the negative news stories they had seen?

They found that the stories of human kindness had by far the most impact. Stories of acts of heroism, people providing free veterinary care for pets living on the streets with their owners, or serving children with not enough food or clothing moved the needle the farthest. Here's what they concluded.

***Including more kindness based content in news coverage could prevent “mean world syndrome” where people believed the world is more dangerous than it actually is. It reduced heightened fear, anxiety, depression, and pessimism.***

The reality is that as followers of Jesus we have the best news ever. We have news about God coming in the flesh as a human being to

usher in a new kind of Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God, the sick are made well and Jesus heals the sick and says we should care about them. In the Kingdom of God, the prostitutes and the outcasts who feel like they are nobodies are somebodies, and so Jesus shows us what that looks like as he eats with those that nobody would associate with. In the Kingdom of God, the King himself lays down his life for his people, and so Jesus hangs on the cross with a crown of thorns around his brow so we might see what the King is really like and be drawn into his Kingdom.

But in the end, this whole mission of Jesus only works if his followers will share AND live out this Good News. So, when Jesus, after his resurrection, gets ready to ascend for the final time, he gives one last commandment which we all know is the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel. He says this in Matthew 28: 19-20.

## **BIBLE**

***19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

This is our job. It is not just about accepting Jesus and knowing we are going to go to heaven. It is not just about having some great personal relationship with Jesus. That might be the starting point, but it is not the ending point. We are meant to be involved in God's mission of bringing the Kingdom of God into being all around us. We are meant to live into the Kingdom values and then sharing that Good News of what God has done in our lives.

I was thinking about this and how much it's like having children in whatever way they come into our lives. Whether we have children biologically or we adopt them or we serve them here in the church, we do that because it is a way of impacting the next generation and



literally giving life, being a part of creating life with God. When we invest in children, we are meant to recognize that they don't belong to us but they belong to God first. Eventually, we give them back to God, and we recognize that wanting what's best for them and seeing them flourish gives us life.

It's the same with our faith. When we are willing to live out our faith and then share it with others who then might claim faith for themselves, they literally received that gift of eternal life and it gets passed on from generation to generation. The Christian faith is only one generation removed from being extinct and our willingness to share the good news of what God has done in our lives is what can help us be a part of something bigger and better, instead of getting bitter.

I have worked with hundreds of churches over the years both serving them and being invited in to consult our coach younger pastors. One of the metrics that we measure here and that every single church should be measuring are people who are making a decision to follow Jesus for the first time or they are reaffirming that decision because they have fallen away or because something new is happening in their life and in their heart. What we know is that when this is not happening in a church, it's not far from death. When I go into a church and I hear people complaining and being bitter, the first question I ask is, **“When was the last time someone was baptized in this church?”**

**VIDEO                      River Baptism**

**GRAPHIC                  River Baptism**

Bitterness in the church is almost always the result of the good news and no longer being shared but instead of being held tightly like it's some sort of prize that if we let go of, we will lose. Let me tell you a little secret. When it comes to sharing Good News, if we understand how it works, it is filled with joy. It is one of those experiences that when you are done you look back and you go, **“Wow that was amazing!”**



When you have a conversation with someone and they become open to something spiritual happening in their lives, and you begin to see that unfold it is awesome. Usually it is something simple like, “Hey, do you want to come to church and check out this new sermon series we are doing?” Sometimes it is more profound like sharing with someone the difference that having Jesus in your life has made for you. As scary as it sounds upfront to have that conversation, when you get done, you feel like you were in the middle of something that God was doing, and it is incredible.

These are e-mails or cards I have received over the past few years.

*My best friend took his life, and I struggled with his death. My next-door neighbor had the courage to come to my door and to bring me a meal because they knew I was struggling with depression. She invited me to come to church with her because her church was amazing. I promised her that I would come but it took me three months before I had the courage to walk in the doors of the church. It made all the difference in the world as God opened one door after another for me and I found healing for my heart and my soul as I turned away from the depression that was enveloping my life and into the light that I found in Christ.*

Can you imagine if this woman had not had the courage to go to her next-door neighbor with a meal and simply ask her to join her to church? Where would she be today?

*When my wife and I started dating, the church was not a part of my life. I was baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church, but I drifted away during high school, and I never returned. I would go to church when I was asked to play for weddings or services, and I was paid for it as a musician. I didn't return to church really until my girlfriend simply asked, “Would you like to come to church with me this weekend?” I returned again and again and now I can't imagine my life without my faith. I find it hard to believe I went all those years basically*

*ignoring God. I'm so glad that God wasn't ignoring me.*

Imagine if that girlfriend had decided she didn't want to disturb her relationship or make things uncomfortable by inviting her boyfriend to share her faith. She invited him to come, and his life was changed.

*I am so grateful for the person who invited me to church. I never went to church after I left home and went to college. Recently, I decided to try and find the church because I felt like something was missing in my life. But every church that I tried seemed to push me away and I quickly gave up hope that faith could be a part of my life that was meaningful. One day at work my coworker casually invited me to come and check out the service at First United Methodist Church. She shared with me how much the church had changed her life and so I went. My life has not been the same since. I was baptized in the river at the age of 35, when I finally found God and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. Had my friend not taken a chance and invited me that one day at work I would not be the person I am today. For that, I owe everything to her for bringing me closer to God.*

Here's one final one that I'll share with you.

*My wife and I were on the brink of divorce when a coworker who knew my marriage was struggling invited me to a marriage workshop at First United Methodist Church. He seemed like he really cared about me even though he didn't know me very well and as a result of the workshop my wife and I started going to church together for the very first time. It saved our marriage and our family and now I can't imagine not having God at the center of our lives.*

It takes great courage to invite someone to a marriage workshop at the church, but you never know how that is going to turn out. What if this person had never tried? Think about how it must feel for those who invite their friends to see this kind of change happen in their lives. These stories would never have happened, and these lives would never have been changed, if people weren't willing to take a risk and

sometimes to be patient.

The first step in sharing our faith might be simply inviting people to church with us, but it can get more complicated than that. It can require a little more boldness on our part sometimes. When it requires more boldness, it can become a bit more challenging. It may be when you are with your grandfather in the hospital and he may not make it through the surgery, and you want him to know about your faith.

Perhaps you have a coworker in the middle of a crisis and there is no marriage workshop coming up at the church. At that moment, you have an opportunity to say words into her life of His life and it's not simply about inviting someone to church, but it's more about sharing something that has helped you through a hard time—or your willingness to share where you find hope. It is those moments where we need to speak up but often are afraid to do that because we feel we don't have the answers to all their questions. The truth is that none of us have the answers to all their questions and that is okay; you don't have to.

Here's how it works. If they say to you, “Will you explain the doctrine of the Trinity?” Then what you can say is this. “I am not sure that I can explain that, but if you come to church this weekend, I bet our pastor can explain it.” Then when you bring them, you can find myself and we can set up a time to talk and explain the doctrine of the Trinity. You can also get us connected via email to set up a conversation.

Maybe they will ask, “How did Jesus’ death on the cross 2000 years ago really do anything to save me from my sins?” You might respond with, “I don't fully understand the entire doctrine of the atonement, but what I can tell you is that when I pray to Jesus and I ask for his forgiveness and I see him on the cross, I feel forgiven. I feel like I have been given grace, unconditional love, and have been given a new beginning and a fresh start.”

When they say something like, “Prove to me the existence of God,” you might simply respond with, “I am not sure I can. There are philosophical arguments for the existence of God, and I could probably find you a book which would have those described for you, such as Lee Strobel’s book, *Is God Real?* But what I can tell you is that I have felt God in my life often. I feel God’s peace and God’s presence. Knowing God and trying to follow Jesus as changed me. I can tell you that.”

## **GRAPHIC      Is God Real – Exploring the Ultimate Question of Life**

What I have discovered is that we don't have to have all the answers to everyone's questions. What we do have is our own story and we must be willing to share that more than anything else. The beautiful thing is that no one can argue with our story. It’s the one thing we are an expert on.

There are times and places where God puts us in a moment, and I wonder if we are going to know where to start. This is why I want you to write this question down on the back of the cards we handed out today. Here's the question that I want you to write down which will help you be able to articulate your story. It is a very simple question.

## **SLIDE      How has Jesus made a difference in my life?**

Take 10 or 30 or 60 minutes to write down the answer to that question. How is my life different because I am a follower of Jesus? If we can tell that story that is all God is asking. We don't have to memorize a large body of Scripture. We don't have to make any big sacrifice. We just must be willing to tell people, “This is how my life is different because I am a follower of Jesus.”

The apostle Peter teaches us a bit about this in 1 Peter 3:13-16. Listen carefully as Peter gives advice on how the early church might bear witness to their faith living in a hostile world.

## **BIBLE**

### **13 Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good?**

**14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. 15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.**

He says several things I hope you can hear.

**SLIDE      First, let good things precede your words.**

Why don't we start by letting others see Christ in us? When we encourage people and we bless them, and we are kind to them, that will go a long way. They may not expect us to be, but when we are persistently showing love and encouragement, it surprises others, and they are more likely to be open to us sharing an invitation to church or to us sharing our story of faith. Peter teaches us by saying, "Show them your faith first."

**SLIDE      Second, always be willing to give an account of your faith.**

We are called to know why we believe in Jesus and what difference he has made in our life. When we answer that question that we wrote down a few minutes ago, be prepared to share that.

**SLIDE      Third, share with gentleness and respect.**

Peter tells us not to be pushy and bossy but share from our heart. If they say, "I don't know if I believe that," then we still show them respect and gentleness. We need to be ready to say, and mean, "Even if you don't believe as I do, I'm still your friend and I care about you." You would be surprised how many lives will be changed when we approach sharing our faith in this way with some humility.

Let me remind you that sharing the Good News is not optional when we become a follower of Jesus. This is how the world is changed.

God's strategic plan is sending you and me to help the world become better and not bitter. We have this message, and we have this hope, and it needs to be given away. We are called to be a river Good News flow through, and not a pond that develops bitter scum. In the process of giving away Good News, we find your own heart expanded. We will find joy in our life by virtue of sharing our faith. That is why the card for this week is about sharing the Good News and has several questions.

**GRAPHIC          Sharing Good News Card**

- 1.    What is my story?**
- 2.    How has God been at work in my life?**
- 3.    Who has God put in my path?**
- 4.    What is their story?**
- 5.    What is my "go to" invite (Sermon Series, Event, Serving, Meal, Divorce or Grief Recovery, etc.)?**

This brings us back to the idea of the kingdom of God. Every person that you invite into the river of faith and begins to follow Jesus has their entire world changed by that. They see life differently. Their values change. Their relationships change. They begin to share and live Good News as well, and the Kingdom of God expands exponentially. We invite others to join us and to be the presence of Jesus Christ by loving God, loving others, and sharing the Good News and we begin to change the world together.

People have told other people who have told other people who told you. The things we do together to shake up the world and have it look more like the Kingdom of God are astounding. We start ministries like Native Hope and the Giving Garden. We go to places like Shiprock, NM and Kenya and Guatemala and down the street to Manna Soup kitchen. When we do those things, the world takes notice of that and people begin to say, "I want to know more about the work that you are doing through your church. I want to know more about that Jesus who

compels you to do this.”

That is what the kingdom of God looks like and that is what happens when share Good News by living out our faith and becoming a part of the Jesus movement, being the presence of Jesus Christ to the world. That's what I want to invite you to share Good News with others, so we can become better reflections of the Kingdom of God.

## **SLIDE      Prayer**

I invite you to bow your head right now and think of one person, maybe two. Think of the names of people that you know who don't go to church, who live around this community, and who might be far away from God. I would like you to pray for them right now. I would like you to give their name to God and say something like this. “God, I pray for this person. Please help me to find ways to reach out to them and to welcome them and to love them.”

Say their names in your prayer right now...

Now, pray that God might use you to share the Good News and expand the Kingdom of God. You can pray something simply like this, *“Lord, I offer my life to you. Help me and use me to make a difference in this world—to do Kingdom stuff in this world.”*

Take a moment to pray that prayer to God now...

*God, I pray that you would place within our hearts a deep desire to share your Good News to a world that desperately needs a little Good News Today. Give us a sense of how fun and exciting it can be to share what you have done for us. Help us, O Lord, to change this community by being courageous enough to invite people to consider Your love for them. May we be people who live out our faith in such a way that others and entire communities can't ignore Your kingdom because they saw it in action through us. Help us to be Jesus Christ to the world. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen.*



## **August 9-10 Order**

1. Maddi welcome people.
2. “Great Things”
3. “Firm Foundation (He Won’t)”
4. Jeff welcomes people:
  - a. QR Code and Connect Card
  - b. Welcome to Maddi (announce Kyle leaving at 11:55)
  - c. Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
5. Announcement Video
6. Sermon
7. Prayer
8. Offering (invite cards)
9. Med Moments
10. “Holy Forever”
11. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
12. Care Ministers
13. Sharing Good News cards
14. Connect with Us
15. Closing Prayer