

These notes follow the God's Not Dead study series, and are longer than normal.



Life Group Sermon Notes

“God's Not Dead: Messiah, Manifestation, Mission (Spreading the News)”

Ps. James Lowe - April 24, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Who was your best friend growing up? Why?
- Who can you lean on today in times of trouble?
- Who (besides your family) would you lay down your life for in a time of crisis?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) *(I)n your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...*

1. Certainty: The Gospel Is True.

No one has total certainty about everything. Yet we can have enough certainty about the Gospel to know it is true. Luke opened his Gospel by stating (Luke 1:1-4):

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke wrote as an historian who carefully investigated the events and drew from eyewitnesses who had been with Jesus from the very beginning.

As we learned in a previous lesson, the Christian message is grounded in history. The events surrounding the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not just statements of religious faith but statements of history that can be tested. Looking at these historical facts, we use a form of reasoning called “abduction.” This asks the question, “What is the best explanation of the facts we know?” Some have suggested that Jesus’s disciples stole His body and then went out and proclaimed He had risen. This would have required them to keep this lie a secret and then go out and risk their lives for a falsehood. Another proposed explanation is that the Romans or the religious leaders moved the body. This is obviously false. All they would have had to do was produce the dead body of Jesus, and Christianity would have died on the spot. Several other alternative explanations have been given, but they are all equally implausible. The best explanation of the facts is that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead three days after His death.

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2. Clarity: What the Gospel Says.

The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died...in our place. Three days later He rose from the dead, proving He is the Son of God and offering salvation and forgiveness of sins to everyone who repents and believes in Him.

God became man in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus was not just a man, but the Creator of the universe in human form. His words were no ordinary words, and His miracles demonstrated His divine authority.

He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died...in our place.

- Christ's sinless life qualified Him to be the spotless offering for sin that the Law required. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Describing Jesus as a lamb connected His sacrifice with the last plague in Egypt, when Moses commanded the Hebrews to place the blood of a lamb over their doorposts. At night God's judgment passed over the houses covered by the blood of the lamb. In the same way, God's judgment passes over us when we accept that Jesus paid the price for our sins at the cross.

Three days later He rose from the dead, proving He is the Son of God.

- His resurrection validated His identity as the Son of God, the promised Savior and Messiah.

[He offers] salvation and forgiveness of sins to everyone who repents and believes in Him.

- We can receive a new life in Christ as we turn from our sins (repent) and put our faith in Christ. By trusting in Him we can see the penalty and guilt of our sins removed, and we can be adopted as His beloved children. Reestablishing our relationship with God progressively heals and transforms us into the people He intended. We can also join the community of His followers.

3. Conviction: The Gospel Should Be Shared.

We must also learn the art of dialogue and asking questions when it comes to talking with others. This approach is called SALT:

- Start a conversation.
- Ask questions.
- Listen.
- Tell the story (the Gospel).

A free app called TheGodTest (GodTestApp.Org) has been developed to help guide you in learning to start conversations that lead to a presentation of this life-changing message about Jesus Christ.

All you need to do is step out in faith and start a conversation. Then, end the encounter by offering to explain the Gospel. The first time may seem awkward, but the more you initiate spiritual conversations and explain your faith, the easier the process becomes. Over time, you will intuitively know when to broach the topic, and you will discern how to best guide the conversation. Also, you will become known as someone who is serious about their faith and who is a safe person who can be asked religious questions.

4. Compassion: Our Motivation for Sharing the Gospel.

The love of God should be our driving motivation to share the message of Christ with others. Scripture says God is kind to ungrateful people (Luke 6:35). It tells us that we are to love our enemies, not just those who are our friends and family. This kind of love is disarming. There are very few barriers that God's love won't penetrate. Perhaps the most popular verse in all the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

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Scripture says that we have been given “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). This means that we are called to bring healing to the wounds of racism, bigotry, and relational breakdown at all levels. If this is to happen, we must not be people who are unforgiving of others or gossips or slanderers. If we live that way, we will effectively be disqualified from helping others. When we see ourselves as reconcilers, however, we bring hope to every situation.

5. Connection: Our Need for the Church

No one can really succeed without the right people helping them and standing with them as they face challenges. The heart of God’s plan is to build His Church. Jesus announced, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). We are called to be part of the Church in a practical way so that we can be encouraged and receive the teaching and correction we need to grow spiritually.

Through being part of a local church and being trained and equipped, you can become an authentic follower of Christ. As you humble yourself and allow others to help you and hold you accountable in your commitments to be faithful to Christ’s Word, you will begin to grow strong in faith and in grace. The end result is that you will soon become an effective witness and defender of the faith.

Sharing our faith is the task He is calling us to. The greatest privilege in life is to partner with God in His work to redeem and rescue mankind. It all starts by answering the great question Jesus is asking you: “Who do you say I am?” Your answer to that question will be the most life-defining words you will ever speak.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Have you ever explained the Gospel to someone in a personal conversation? How did it go? If more than once, when was the last time?
- Are you involved in the life of a local church? If so, how has it helped your walk with God? If not, why not?
- What do you think are some of the reasons why some Christians aren't committed to a local church?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to forgive you of any shrinking back from the privilege and duty to communicate the Gospel to others, and to give you new opportunities and fresh strength to do so.
- Ask God to reveal any potential temptations to which you might be susceptible that would cause you to disengage from being truly involved in the life of your local church. Ask him to show you how you can become more trained by your church.
- Ask God to show you who you can help become more plugged into the life and training of your local church.