# "Speaking from the Heart"

# Lesson 12: Communicators of the gospel Dalraida Church of Christ, Summer 2025

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"So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you" (Romans 1:15).

# Interesting Facts for the Beginning

Interesting trivia: The Olympics are identified by the torch relay. This is a modern addition to the games. The Olympic torch relay, which transports the Olympic flame from Olympia, Greece to the various designated sites of the Games, has no ancient precedent. Carl Diem introduced it at the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Diem planned the first Olympic torch relay to take the flame from Olympia to Berlin over 3,187 kilometers (1,980 miles) by 3,331 runners in twelve days and eleven nights. Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels commissioned filmmaker and propagandist Leni Riefenstahl to film the event. (Klein, Christopher, 12 June 2024. "The Olympic Torch Relay's Surprising Nazi Origins." *History.com*).

An ancient Greek athletic relay race illustrates evangelism.  $^{\bullet}$  "Lampadephoria" ( $\Lambda \alpha \mu \pi \alpha \delta \eta \phi \rho \rho i \alpha$ ) were ancient Greek torch races. The event was usually a foot race, but sometimes it was on horses by Greek youth entering manhood. The relay runners ( $\lambda \alpha \mu \pi \alpha \delta i \sigma \alpha i$ ) or  $\lambda \alpha \mu \pi \alpha \delta i \phi \rho o i$ ) were posted at intervals. The first in each line receives the torch (which was lit from the pagan altar) quickly running and handing it to the next in line, and then second to the third, until the end line is reached. The winner was the first team to pass the torch over the finish line. If a torch went out during the race the racer's team would lose the race.

Often Inspiration uses the Greek athletic race metaphor to stress Christian duty. Several aspects of the ancient athletic event illustrate the urgency of the Christian being actively involved, never quitting, protecting the light of the gospel's message, and stressing the urgency of unity and personal responsibilities!

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

## The Message of VICTORY!

The legend of 1 "The Battle of Marathon" is well known. The Greek historian Herodotus, the main source for the Greco-Persian Wars, mentioned the messenger who ran from Marathon to Athens with the news that the Athenian army had fought and won the grueling battle. The messenger arrived, raised his right hand and shouted "Rejoice! We are victorious!"

The Greeks had a • special military word for victory—it was "euangelion" (εὐαγγέλιον). The New Testament took the military meaning and transitioned it to translate our English word "gospel" from the Christian perspective. We should not forget the historic etymology of this word as it has a powerful impact upon the Christian's communication. A great battle had been fought. An amazing defeat with blessings has been secured.

The phrase of "the Gospel" is translated literally as "God's good news." "The Gospel" is a synecdoche for the entire message of God to mankind with two words ("the gospel" includes morality, obedience, submission, repentance, etc.). These commands must be followed precisely and never changed into "another gospel." The phrase must not be restricted only to Christ's death, burial and resurrection; it is not limited to how a person becomes a Christian. The Gospel's message includes ALL facets of obedience demanded by God. IF one complies with God's commands THEN one rejoices in a victory over Satan. Some try to restrict salvation by "the gospel" to "believe in the death, burial and resurrection" of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4). That is false teaching. It fails to understand that ALL aspects of God's teaching are "the gospel." This is like one taking Acts 16:31 and teaching "faith only" by saying to be saved all one needs to do is "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." The full scope of God's requirements must be factored into our response!

- Critical aspects should be considered in communication of the gospel...
  - In the spiritual teaching of the gospel, "What is the message we are presenting? How comprehensive and consistent are we with the biblical teaching?"

• In the athletic racing metaphor, "Have we dropped the torch?" "Have we allowed the flame of the torch to be extinguished?" "Have we 'hidden' the torch under a bushel?" "Have we successfully passed the torch on to others who will faithfully carry it?"

### The Christian's Obligation to Communicate

When you combine the biblical metaphor with the historical understanding, you discover an important message to Christians regarding their communication of the gospel.

• Every Christian is a Torchbearer! Every Christian is carrying a torch with a message of good news of an amazing victory. Knowing that one is entrusted with that message obligates each Christian to—• energy must be expended; dedication must drive action; weariness and fatigue must be disregarded; the mission must remain #1!

Christ has handed a torch to EACH one obeying the Gospel! He has handed YOU a torch.

- How do you communicate your faith?
- How effective are you in proclaiming the message of victory?
- Jesus did NOT say, "I encourage each to attempt to impact as salt and light by osmosis." One's influence is critical but is NOT the only expectation by God. He DID say "YOU ARE salt and light—do NOT fail to impact; do NOT rationalize silence! Let YOUR light shine!"
- Christians face devilish discouragements about torch bearing duties.
  - "I just don't have time."
  - "I don't know what to say."
  - "I feel awkward talking to family or friends."
  - "I'm embarrassed to challenge someone about their religious beliefs and practices. It is much more comfortable to me just to say nothing."
  - "I don't want to hurt anyone's feeling or sound self-righteous, so I just keep silent."

Inspiration addresses these objections from Torchbearers seeking to rationalize their failure in the race: "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

#### The Critical Urgency of the Torch Bearer

Culture is anti-torch bearing! We live in an epoch when standing for absolute truth is laughable, sarcastically, and, offensively described. To counter this culture, we need:

A character in contrast!

We must be different and demonstrate how being different is a good thing. "But now 'in Christ'" (Ephesians 2:13).

A transparency that honors God and seeks to save man from his evil choices.

Much of today's skepticism, sarcasm and cynicism stems from the hypocrisy of "media evangelists" or "local religions" that focus on worldliness and money. Many have been burned by distorted messages or manipulative messengers.

A genuine respect.

Christians must EARN respect from others who will then be willing to listen because they have seen "the gospel in shoe leather"! The Master's reputation was effective because of "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

A firm trust!

Those in the world need to have trust rebuilt, communication lines repaired, and hearts reopened to seeking God's truth for their lives. This DOES NOT happen quickly. Christians must look for positive, natural ways to hold up the gospel's torch and announce the greatest victory in human history!

"For whoever has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith" (1 John 5:4).

#### The Torch—The Gospel Message

The "torch" is the gospel message. We must be careful in defining "gospel message" communicates. Inspiration utters strong outrage at those who tamper and rethink the New Testament Gospel (Galatians 1:8-9, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, even now I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!").

Romans 1:1-17 lists critical characteristics of the Gospel message:

• 4 Origin.

It is "the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1).

The early Anglo-Saxon word was "Godspell" which meant "God-story." The Gospel is a message about the Lord God Almighty. It was revealed to man through Jesus Christ the Son of God. Its entirety was written down by inspired authors who were directed by the Holy Spirit. The written gospel provides all that man needs for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us"). The Gospel's story is the entire Bible!

Continuity.

It is "the gospel he promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2). The Old Testament is NOT to be erased and considered unimportant. The Old Testament was Volume 1 of the good news. It must be taught and preached so we will know the "whole story"!

Subject.

"His Son...Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:3-4). If Jesus Christ's teachings, commands, and doctrinal points are not included in our torch bearing, we are not heralding the wonderful victory the Gospel announces! If we fail to include commands, doctrines, and specific pronouncements of good and evil, our proclamation will never be what the Bible identifies as "the Gospel." In practicality we are hiding out light under a bushel!

Purpose.

The purpose for our Torchbearing is "to call people...to the obedience that comes from faith" (Romans 1:5). The Gospel is a global message requiring compliance from ALL regardless of culture or national morality. Only as one hears and obeys, will one possess a wonderful victory! (John 20:31, "(T)hese have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name").

Power.

When fatigued in the race; when discouraged by the conflicts...remember "the gospel is the <u>power</u> of God" (Romans 1:16). When taught truthfully and followed consistently, the Gospel is powerful. It changes lives by changing hearts and minds! The power is in the seed and once planted and nurtured, amazing growth will result (1 Corinthians 3:6, "(T)hese have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name").

#### The Torchbearer—a Witness

The charge Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles/Followers is clear, "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The term "witness" has been distorted to feed pride rather than to teach God's truth. Many want to "witness" by focusing a spotlight on themselves. They talk about how they have changed, what they have accomplished, how much financial gains they have achieved. Scripture requires that faithfulness characterize the Followers of God who are "witnesses" of God's truth.

- A faithful witness never speaks "half" of the truth.
- A faithful "witness" is bound by his oath to speak only the truth.
- A faithful witness is the source of information that brings justice.
- A faithful witness speaks of truth that is a personal part of his life.
- A faithful witness honors God. "One who declares truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit" (Proverbs 12:17).
- A faithful witness will find joy in salvation. "A false witness will perish" (Proverbs 21:18).

# Communicators of the Gospel

The Church of Christ in Corinth reveals a troubling fact—not all who claim to be "Torchbearers of the gospel" are embraced by God. In 2 Corinthians, Paul identifies those who distort approaches to evangelism.

The Peddler (2 Corinthians 2:17, "For we are not like the many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God"). Paul identifies those who utilize marketing techniques in the preaching of the gospel. These were deceptive and money/power hungry. They pushed a product that was not the true gospel but stressed worldly salesmanship and personal profits. Their counterpart was the "Snake-oil huckster" in the old west days!

Some teach an incomplete gospel because they think the full message is offensive. Some of the first missionaries to China left out the crucifixion of Christ because the Asians found it too shocking! Sadly, many other truths of the pure gospel are omitted because the peddler thinks the teachings are offensive (drinking alcoholic beverages, marriage/divorce, acappella only worship music, gender roles, etc.).

The faithful Torchbearer imitates Paul and does not "peddle" the gospel, but is a faithful witness honestly teaching the entire counsel of God.

The Self-Proclaimer (2 Corinthians 4:5, "(W)e do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants on account of Jesus."). Removing the focus on Self from teaching/preaching is a huge challenge. Pride extinguishes the torch of the gospel's message! God wants people converted to Jesus Christ and NOT to the preacher/teacher. Faith MUST be focused upon God, not upon the messenger's eloquence, wisdom, persuasiveness ("I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified...so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of mankind, but on the power of God," 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

The Torchbearer must stand behind the cross of Christ so all will see Christ and not a larger-than-life mortal personality! "(F)ar be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

The Trickster (2 Corinthians 4:2, "(W)e have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in trickery nor distorting the word of God, but by the open proclamation of the truth commending ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God."). Many strive to find a subtle way to trap someone into hearing the gospel. We need to be involved in encouraging others to read and study the Bible, but we must take great care not to become tricksters masking the real agenda and message.

#### Avoiding **Manipulation**

Some justify any method of evangelism "IF IT WORKS." By this it is often meant, "IF it results in many baptisms." The focus is NOT on teaching and true conversion but on "how many baptisms" are recorded. They thus justify a deceptive means if the results are good. Such flagrantly contradict God's desires. "We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Each possesses a God-given freewill to choose to either obey God or disobey God.

- "Persuasion" is an intelligent and convicting case for the Christian faith. This allows each to exercise freewill in response. Persuasion is "fact-based data" and remains consistent.
- "Manipulation" is prodding one to accept a belief or action without making a reasonably informed decision. It is based upon emotions resulting in one allowing "feelings" to choose. Manipulation is control by fluid emotional stimuli.

Common historic manipulations exercised in religion...

- Conditional love and friendship. A warm welcome is extended but it is superficial. You are being set up for a "sales pitch"! The Christian's love is to be sincere (Romans 12:9, "Love must be free of hypocrisy"). "Love-bombing" or "swarming" is a term coined to describe when a visitor appears and instantly others surround them (i.e. the "Crossroads Movement" of the 1980s). One visits and is smothered with attention. Later he is threatened or punished with the prospect of this "love" being withheld IF he does not conform to the group's expectations. "Love" is used as a manipulative control that removes one's freewill choice.
- Arbitrary goals and quotas. Setting arbitrary goals nurtures inherent dangers. These cause unnecessary pressure. These coerce each person to do what he may not be "talented" to do (I Corinthians 12 critically asks—Can the eye do what the big toe does? Should it be expected that all body parts do what the others do?).

The phrase, "Each one WIN one" sounds catchy but it fails to understand the biblical pattern, "some" are talented to plant, others are talented to water "but God causes the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

CRITICAL NOTE: The member of the "Body" must not become arrogant and puffed up. We must not claim "credit" for someone else's faith saying, "I converted her." The Torchbearer gives the glory to God!

Artificial goals and timetables cause disastrous premature or ill-considered choices. There is no biblical timetable for one's conversion. The New Testament does not set evangelistic quotas for individuals or Churches. We are to plant or water and allow the gospel seed to grow according to its God-appointed schedule (Mark 4:26-28).

Goals are good and biblical (Philippians 3:13—"one thing I do"). Caution must be used to make sure such goals and expectations take a comprehensive view of the congregation's talents and abilities. Failure to meet the goals communicates discouragement and an unrealistic expectation to the Body of Christ.

\* Fear appeals. This is another selfish, manipulative tool for behavior control. A cartoon shows a mother and child sitting at table while a thunderstorm rages outside. The mother says, "Thunder and lightning are God's way of saying, 'You better eat your butter beans?'"

Fear is an appropriate motivation to obey God BUT it is often manipulated. The choices made from fear quickly evaporate as the feelings of fear are removed. (Remember the national "repentance" following the Twin Towers of 911—the immediate repentance lasted about six months!)

Our reverent fear of God motivates us to persuade men (2 Corinthians 5:11, "knowing the fear of God, we persuade men."). We must fear God. We must obey God to avoid the holy wrath of God. BUT we must avoid urging others to make an impulsive, uninformed decision in a moment of emotional vulnerability. Serving God because of fear never produces the joys and blessings that true faith produces!

#### The Apostle Paul's Torchbearing Model

Paul's evangelistic model suggests the best option for Christians who want to communicate, from their hearts, the good news of salvation.

The Torchbearer: The aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14-16, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?").

The Christian torchbearer has a "sweet smell" to his life. He is a "breath of fresh air" in a stale and smelly culture. His presence brings instant joy, hope and victory. The quality of his life that makes the gospel "attractive" (Titus 2:10, "(S)howing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect).

Communication of the gospel begins with the credible, sweet-smelling fragrance that is a part of all who submit to the Lord's commands.

\*The Torchbearer: Jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7, "(W)e have this treasure in earthen containers, so that the extraordinary greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves").

This metaphor should humble those who view themselves as superior communicators. These think their eloquence, entertaining stories and large crowds are responsible for all the good things. But they are mud jars! The gospel is kept in common earthen jars. God calls us to be useful vessels and not ornamental vases!

The Torchbearer: Christ's Ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God").

The Ambassador is only a servant. He functions in an official capacity, but he must conduct business as directed by his superior! The Christian is an ambassador FOR Christ. As such he cannot speak for himself; cannot dictate conditions that he wants implemented; cannot speak anything but what is directed in official communication (The New Testament). If he does otherwise, he will be recalled!

"We are heralds not hucksters; ambassadors, not advertisers!"

\* The Torchbearer: Technique

We do not find a specific technique in the Bible commanding us how we are to communicate the gospel to others. Christ directly called people to repent but at other times He served them and left. At times He gave a clear, pointed lesson but then on another occasion deliver a parable that was not understood.

We cannot "package and sell" evangelistic communication techniques! "The Father is more concerned that we conform to His likeness than mimic His methodology." When we accept and relate to outsiders, as the Lord did, then we will find the good and honest hearts open to His gospel.

The \*techniques of evangelism can be described as:

- A teacher transmitting data.
- A salesman selling a product.
- A friend discussing a spiritual matter of mutual interest.

A person viewed as transmitting religious information will not have much of a lasting impact. One who manipulates to get a response will have brief success but no permanency. The Torchbearer that is caring, is a genuine friend, and shares faith's commands in a sincere and honest way will make a significant impact!

Listen to Paul's technique...I suggest that we incorporate these points in our Torchbearing!

"(W)e have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not intending to please people, but to please God, who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed...nor did we seek honor from people, either from you or from others...But we proved to be gentle among you. As a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children, in the same way we had a fond affection for you and were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:4-8).

# **Develop Your Personal Technique!**

As we take the torch of the gospel, we must make it OUR personal, individual effort. By observing what some do, you may get some helpful ideas to assist you. But in the final analysis, EACH of us must develop our own personal technique and utilize our own personal talents!

We must speak from the heart—honestly, clearly, and sincerely. Each must be a Torchbearer, but 6 EACH must find a style that allows him to be natural and comfortable. Here are some suggestions offered in Scripture:

• Pray for "open doors"—opportunities to love, care for, serve and share the gospel's message (Colossians 4:3, "(P)raying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ"; 1 Corinthians 16:9, "A wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries").

- Serve because it is "right" to do (Luke 17:12-19, "And as He entered a village, ten men with leprosy who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. But Jesus responded and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.").
- Prepare for verbal torchbearing (1 Peter 3:15, "(S)anctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you").
- Do not force a preset technique or curriculum.
- Focus all comments upon the Lord and His commands.
- Ask good, gently probing queries: "Have you actually read the Bible?" "From where did you get that idea?"
- When tough questions are asked do not be afraid to say "I do not know BUT I will study and get back to you." Realize that you do not have all the answers!
- Avoid religious jargon—"church talk" that has become wrested by false religions ("take up the cross," "born again" etc.). When time comes to inject these phrases use Scripture to define and explain.
- Relax! Sow the Seed of the gospel personally, genuinely and faithfully. Your ONLY TASK is to plant and water! The energy of the gospel seed will do the work!
- "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?'" (Acts 8:30-31).