

Spreading the Word

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The story in the Bible begins with all-powerful God creating an amazing place of generous beauty, abundance, security, and provision. He creates humans to dwell in that creation *with Him*. He gives them instructions and responsibility to fulfill His plan—for them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.

For reasons I cannot understand, that is not enough for them, so in direct disobedience to God's command for their good, they decide to grasp for more. Death enters the perfect world, and all is thrown into a de-creation—bringing evil, ugliness, scarcity, insecurity, pain, and difficulty.

Yet God does not change His plan to dwell with us nor His plan for us to rule the earth. But there is an unsolvable problem keeping Him distant from us: He is holy and sin must be purged. So, He pursues working through people, empowering them, and sometimes tolerating them, for His purposes.

If we read this story, as if for the first time, we realize in Genesis 3 that there will be *one* who will be able to resist temptation and obey God. We read about those who walked closely with God and the amazing faith they lived out; ultimately, they all failed. The sin that entered the world now stains every person. So, we diligently look for that *one* who is different. Yet even the likes of Abraham... Moses... David... all exercise great faith and failure.

Finally, in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), God sends *One* to dwell with humans who *does* live a perfect life and does not grasp for more on His own. He will restore the relationship with God by giving His life as a ransom for many. In Luke 4, after quoting Isaiah 61, that *one*—Jesus, the Son of Man—announces that He is the *one* Isaiah talked about.¹ In some of the most powerful words ever spoken, in 4:21, He says, "...*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" Far more than the amazing truth that *the King* has come is that He actually *sees* the fullness of the kingdom, where good news is brought to the poor, the broken hearted are healed, captives are

released...mourners are comforted, beauty replaces ashes, oil salves the mourning, praise strengthens faint spirits. The pictures in those words speak to a profound transformation of our world, and Jesus sees it fulfilled even as He is about to live the perfect life that makes it possible! It is a re-creation back out of the de-creation caused by Adam and Eve's sin. And we can see that reversal in Revelation 21–22. There will be a new heaven and earth, the restoration of all things, wiping away of every tear, and most amazing of all:

*"Behold, the **tabernacle** of God is among the people, and He will **dwell** among them and they shall be His people and God Himself will be among them..."*
(21:3).

As believers, sharing the above message of God's desire and plan to dwell with humans is what we are called to do. Telling the story like I have above is one way to present that Gospel; but no matter how we do, the truth of the biblical story must shape our purpose and calling. Yet often that witness gets clouded by other priorities. When people first believe and turn from sin, they become part of the Body of Christ. And, while never perfect, a local fellowship often becomes a "home" for people, a refuge from the world. This can be a good thing. And then, increasingly, we hang around people who agree with us on issues of faith. Pastors strongly encourage church members to "be there when the doors of the church are open" and even be together for Bible studies and prayer groups. Increasingly, churches start schools for Christian (only) students. Our training institutions prepare pastors to serve the church with gifts and calling that tends toward discipling, teaching, and otherwise caring and growing the flock to maturity. These are all good things, or they can be. Yet the focus for announcing that good news *outside* the Body of Christ seems all too rare.

If you are a reader of *MF*, you know the problem is that even *if* believers spread their faith, a huge majority of the non-believers in the world do not live near enough Christians. Estimates say something like 87%+ of the Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists do not personally know a Christian of any kind. Even if that estimate is way off, it still represents a huge gap in spreading the truth that Jesus, the King of all Kings, has come and will come back. That is why we are here at Frontier Ventures. That is what we focus on in *Mission Frontiers*. ❏

¹ The word "gospel" is used in other literature during the rule of Rome for an announcement of a king.