

**Be kind.  
Be present.  
Be brave.  
Be Jesus.**

**42**  
SECONDS

## **42 Seconds**

*A Sermon Series and Bible Study  
Companion to the book by Carl Medearis*

**By Justin Rossow**

Copyright © 2018 Justin Rossow and St. Luke—Ann Arbor  
4205 Washtenaw Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48108

St. Luke—Ann Arbor is dedicated to helping people delight in taking a next step following Jesus. For more information, visit [stlukeaa.org](http://stlukeaa.org) or email: [office@StLukeAA.org](mailto:office@StLukeAA.org).

To support St. Luke's mission and ministry and encourage the production of discipling resources like this one, visit [stlukeaa.org](http://stlukeaa.org), hit the Give tab, and put "42 Seconds" in the "Other" donation line.

This sermon series and bible study are intended to support the congregational use of *42 Seconds: The Jesus Model for Everyday Interactions* © 2018 by Carl Medearis. All rights Reserved. A NavPress resource published in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

*Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

*Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™*

More resources and articles on preaching and metaphor theory can be found at [justinrossow.com](http://justinrossow.com).

## Table of Contents

Introduction to Sermon Structures	iv
6 Tips for Preaching a New Structure	v
Week 1: Be Kind, Sermon Notes	1
Week 1: Be Kind, Sermon Manuscript (Relational Structure)	4
Week 2: Be Present, Sermon Notes	12
Week 2: Be Present, Sermon Manuscript (Multiple Story Structure)	15
Week 3: Be Brave, Sermon Notes	23
Week 3: Be Brave, Sermon Manuscript (Definition Structure)	26
Week 4: Be Jesus, Sermon Notes	32
Week 4: Be Jesus, Sermon Manuscript (Comparison/Contrast Structure)	35
Introduction to 42 Seconds Bible Study	42
Week 0: Introduction, Bible Study Handout	45
Week 1: Be Kind, Bible Study Handout	47
Week 2: Be Present, Bible Study Handout	49
Week 3: Be Brave, Bible Study Handout	51
Week 4: Be Jesus, Bible Study Handout	53
Bibliography	55

## Introduction to Sermon Structures

Trying something new for the first time is always a little uncomfortable.

Sermon structures are no different. Any sermon structure simply describes the shape of the experience of the sermon: what comes first, and why? What's the connection between the different sections of the sermon and how do they hang together? Where is the highpoint? How do you get there? And how to you end?

A sermon structure describes the dynamics of the preaching event, and the first time you test-drive a shiny new sermon structure, it's easy to feel like you are slightly out of control. Your natural cadence, your expectations, your anticipation of what your hearers will do next, your flow—when all of that gets thrown out the window, it's natural to feel a little disoriented in the pulpit.

I know that. I've lived it. I've taught it. But I kind of forgot it.

For the first sermon in this *42 Seconds* sermon series, I preached a structure I had never used before. I chose a Relational Structure because it seemed to fit so well with what I was trying to accomplish that day in the hearts and lives of my hearers. I thought it fit the theme and the content of the sermon well. And I thought it would be good to try a structure that was new to me. After all, there are maybe a dozen or so different ways of organizing a sermon that I use fairly regularly, so I thought it would be *\*fun\** to try something new.

That's when I remembered: trying something for the first time is always a little uncomfortable. From the writing process to the delivery, this sermon was all uphill.

What I found most disconcerting was the actual experience of preaching. I discovered again that every preacher has a rhythm, an expectation, a give-and-take with the hearers. One reason you change sermon structures from week to week is so that your rhythm doesn't become a rut. As soon as your hearers can time their pot roast by your sermon, or reach for their offering when you get to that standard phrase on page four, you've lost an important element of preaching.

So using a variety of forms is a service to your hearers. But using a new form is a special challenge for the preacher. Because the people don't laugh where you expect them to. They become thoughtful at unusual times. Your internal clock that measures the time of the sermon and the Law/Gospel experience of the hearers feels like it has lost calibration.

It's uncomfortable trying something for the first time. After worship I found I wasn't even sure how the sermon had been received. I usually know when it feels like the sermon connected and when it feels like I didn't quite get the message across. Thank God, sanctified ears still receive God's Word even when I am not on my game. But this wasn't a "bad" sermon; at least, I don't

think it was. And it didn't feel like a "good" sermon, either. It just felt, well, *different than I expected*. Which is really just what I should have expected.

So next time you challenge yourself to try a new sermon structure in order to more faithfully proclaim God's Word and more humbly serve your hearers, remember it ain't easy. Expect it to feel different than you expected. And check out the six tips below to help you screw up the courage to test-drive a different sermon structure. You and your hearers will both get more out your preaching ministry if you continue to add tools to your bag, one slightly uncomfortable sermon at a time.

## 6 Tips for Test-Driving a New Sermon Structure

Before you buckle up and take a new sermon design out for a spin, here are some tips to get you—and your hearers—home safely.

### 1. Keep Your Goal in Mind

I find the best way to use sermon structures effectively is to have a clear sense of what you are trying to shape in the hearts and lives of your hearers *before* you ask which structure helps you get that done. In other words, *figure out what you are trying to say before you figure out how you are going to say it*.

The structure isn't the most important thing about a sermon; the structure helps you do the most important thing: bring God's Word to God's people in a moment of grace.

When you go to try a new structure, make an intentional choice. Pick one that seems to help you accomplish the goal you have in mind. Of course, since the structure is new to you, you aren't exactly sure how it's going to play out. But not knowing all the details won't stop you from making that choice intentionally.

Once you know the goal you have for the faith and lives of your hearers, keep that destination clearly in mind as you experiment with a new structure. Be willing to change structures if the one you chose just isn't working. The first time I tried to preach a Relational Structure, it ended up being a Multiple Story Structure. That's OK. It just means it might take you more than one try to get the hang of something new.

Keep the goal of your sermon in mind, and make sure the structure serves the goal.

## 2. Pay Attention to Your Transitions

If I have trouble remembering what comes next in the sermon, it's probably a structure problem. If the transitions don't keep the flow moving naturally, the structure itself will be less effective for the preacher and hearers.

In fact, you can identify many sermon structures simply by the transitions. As you move from *Oops!* to *Ugh!* in a Lowry Loop, or from the first inadequate answer to the second, better-but-still-inadequate answer in a Question Answered design, or from one side of a seemingly contradictory truth to the other in a Paradox Maintained sermon, the transitions all sound and feel identifiably unique.

[Side note: I like to play a Sunday afternoon game with my 9th-grade daughter where she has to guess the sermon structure from worship—and tell me her reasoning (Best. Dad. Ever.). A few weeks ago I started the sermon by saying, “I’d like to share three stories with you today...” She had the Multiple Story Structure nailed before I got through my first sentence.]

All that is to say, *transitions are the most unique and identifiable part of any sermon structure*. So if you are preaching a structure that is new to you, spend some extra time paying careful attention to how one section of the sermon flows naturally into the next.

Transitions are a roadmap for your hearers; if you are less familiar with the terrain, make sure the map makes sense to you before you try and take your hearers on a tour of the surrounding countryside.

## 3. Give Yourself Extra Time

You’ve got four weddings and a funeral scheduled, and the voters meeting got moved on top of the confirmation parent meeting, and that’s when you have three unexpected crisis counseling sessions. We’ve all had those kind of weeks.

At the risk of being obvious, that’s not a good week to try out a new structure. When time is tight, you want a comfortable sermon flow you know inside and out. Chances are, you’ll be lucky to have a complete *outline* by Sunday morning, so you need to know the structure well.

*Plan an extra 20-25% for prep time if you are using a less familiar structure.* You’re going to have to do more rewriting and even some rethinking. Your patterns of preparation are refined through well-worn usage to get the product you are currently producing. Try something new and the old process just doesn’t work the same.

And that’s OK. In fact, it’s exciting. Who wants to preach (or listen to!) the same sermon week after week? Just plan ahead, cut out an extra meeting or two, pencil a rewrite into your calendar, cancel a staff meeting—*intentionally plan margin*. You just might need it.

#### **4. Trust the Process**

Have you ever taught a kid how to ride a bike? It seems completely ridiculous that moving forward would keep you from falling over. Your first reaction when that bike starts to wobble is to back off, protect yourself, slow down; and that's when you bite the dust.

Preaching a new sermon structure is like that.

You're trying to make the thing work. You get a little forward momentum, and all of a sudden it feels like you are going to crash and burn. It doesn't hold together the way you thought it would. The transitions don't feel natural. It's like you got up on the bike for a second, you saw the 3D treasure chest at the bottom of the magic picture, and then, all of a sudden, you lose perspective and come to a grinding halt.

Your first reaction will be to scrap this silly new structure and revert to your go-to sermon outline just to get it done by Sunday. (That's one reason you need more time: time to start to succeed, and then to fail, and then to work through the failure to a better understanding.)

Sometimes, you really should scrap this draft and start over with a different structure. And sometimes you need to trust the process and *shape the sermon in ways that others have found helpful, even if you don't quite see it yet*.

If the goal of your sermon fits the new structure, don't give up too easily. Trust the process. Don't evaluate the structure based on what you imagine will go wrong; try it out and evaluate what actually happens.

#### **5. Don't Judge By Feel**

When I preached that new sermon structure a few weeks ago, I realized something that is often hidden from my conscious experience: *I evaluate a sermon while it is happening*.

How are people responding? What nonverbals are they sending? Did they get quiet and focused at the right spot? Did they laugh when that tension was released? Did they experience the Gospel where I thought they would?

All of these and many more minute data points are observed and processed in the act of preaching. The preacher uses that feedback loop to pick up pace, dwell longer on a topic, make a clarifying statement, or rephrase on the fly.

But that feedback loop is tuned to the sermon structure. When you are familiar with a structure, you know the contours of the whole, what to expect when, and how you can make natural adjustments based on the input you are receiving from your hearers.

I found that *my feedback loop was disrupted when I preached a new structure*. I felt slightly disoriented as I engaged the people and evaluated their response. I didn't have a set of expectations with which to evaluate the sermon. I wasn't sure how it was going, or even how it went.

I imagine most preachers have a sense about whether they preached the sermon they intended or not. Of course, we trust the Holy Spirit to work in the Word whether we have a good day in the pulpit or not. And since the hearers bring almost as much to the sermon as the preacher does, we can't take too much credit (or blame) for what gets heard and lived out.

But still, there are times when you leave the pulpit with a prayer of thanks, and other times when you leave praying for divine intervention; some sermons “work” while some “fall flat.”

When I preached a new structure, I discovered I wasn't able to evaluate the same way I usually do. If I trusted only my experience of the sermon, I might never use that structure again. *But I sought input from trusted listeners and was able to evaluate based on their input as well as my own.*

When preaching a new structure, don't jump to conclusion based on your experience of the sermon. Your sense of the sermon will be less accurate precisely because the structure is new.

## **6. Get Right Back in the Saddle**

The first time I tried to preach a Relational Structure, I ended up defaulting to a more familiar structure because it just wasn't working. It took me almost a year to try again.

I used that Relational Structure four weeks ago in a sermon, and it went—well, it was hard to evaluate exactly how it went. But outside input leads me to believe it went just fine.

This weekend I am preaching, you guessed it, a Relational Structure sermon again. I didn't force it, but the goal of the sermon and the topic at hand seemed to make it a natural possibility. So I opted to preach that new structure again soon after I gave it a shot for the first time.

You probably aren't surprised that the process went a lot smoother the second time around. I had a much clearer idea of what should go where, and how to make the transitions seem natural and obvious. The structure shaped what I wanted to say in ways that helped me say it and, I think, will help the hearers experience it.

*The second time around is way more natural than the first.* Obvious, right? Just remember that obvious truth the next time you use a structure that's new to you. The first couple attempts might be a bit bumpy, or even painful. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and get right back in the saddle. Your hearers will be grateful you did. And so will you.



42  
SECONDS

Humility is not  
thinking less  
of yourself  
but thinking about  
yourself less.

## Week 1: Be Kind

**Big Idea:** “It’s basically impossible to introduce people to Jesus if we’re not kind to them” (2).

**Goal:** That the hearers engage others in open, authentic, curious, gracious conversation.

**Big Problem:** By nature we are self-centered, self-interested, self-important people who value answers not questions. We are defensive, insecure, turned inward (*incurvatus in se*), always seeking self-justification.

**Big Promise:** In Jesus, we have no need to be right or to defend ourselves, our positions, even Jesus. We are free to adopt others’ values (as far as possible) and to humbly place other people above our need to feel right.

### Readings for Worship:

- Proverbs 16:18-24, especially verse 24: “Gracious words are... sweet to the soul.”
- Philippians 2:1-11 “In humility value others above yourself...”
- Luke 8:40-56 Jesus takes time with a woman while an important and influential leader is waiting.

## Sermon 1: Relational Structure

The Relational Structure seems like a good way to start off a sermon series that hinges on authentic relationships. This way of preaching asks the preacher to be open and vulnerable in a way that allows the congregation to be open and vulnerable, too. In this way, the sermon itself embodies one of the key teachings/experiences of the sermon series: *your* genuine openness invites openness from others.

For a more detailed look at this structure, read *Communicating for a Change* by Andy Stanley and Lane Jones (2006). For a brief overview, check out <https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/dynamic/relational/>.

## Sermon 1 Outline

**ME: My personal interaction with being kind (or not) to others.**

Show that you personally experience both the need to self-justify and the joy of not worrying about what other people think. You can be open and kind to people; except when you're not.

**WE: Our state as sinners: a circle turned in on itself, mixed with moments of real joy.**

Show how your hearers also struggle with our fundamental sin problem, and also have moments of relationship.

**GOD: Jesus breaks the circle, seeks the good of others before himself.**

See the way Carl tells the story of Jesus, Jairus, and the woman in Luke 8 in *42 Seconds* (8-10).

**YOU: In Jesus, you have no need for self-justification. You are free to be open to others.**

To Jairus, and to every individual crying out for affirmation and a sense of value, Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. I am going with you. And the story isn't over yet."

**WE: What if we were, more and more, a community of people who value others above themselves?**

When we live out of the confidence that Jesus values us deeply and individually, we have the chance as a community to be open to people and value others even above ourselves

**Sermon 1 YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/ko2Gi8VG-Qw>

## **Prayer for the Week**

Father, I know that all people in this fallen creation are by nature self-centered, self-interested, and self-important people. But it's hard to admit that I am self-centered; I am self-interested; I am self-important.

Like a circle turned in on itself, I want to protect my self-esteem; I hide my faults, even from myself.

Set me free, Lord: free from the need to defend or justify my failures.

Give me confidence in the forgiveness won for me by Jesus on the cross.

Give me the courage to live as a true sinner who has received true pardon.

Then shape in me the humility of my Lord Christ. Give me the freedom to value others above my need to be right. Amen.

## Sermon 1: Be Kind Relational Structure

### 1. ME (my personal interaction with the topic)

In the name of Jesus, dear friends.

I remember a cartoon. It was one of those religious cartoons – just one of those single panels. Back when, I don't know, I must have been only two or three years into the ministry at the time. (At least I hope so.) I remember the cartoon fairly vividly. It was black and white and it had a preacher man, kind of middle age, overweight, wearing a coat and tie.

And in the cartoon there was a thought bubble. He is kind of in a hurry, running down the hall, and there is a thought bubble that says: "Oh, no! There's Susan! I told her I was going to pray for her, and I haven't yet. 'Dear God, please be with Susan.'" And then out loud he says, "Oh, Susan, how are you? I've been praying for you!"

I remember that cartoon vividly because at the time it absolutely nailed me. I mean, I had done that very thing, probably that week, and more than once. That's why I say I really hope it was in that first year or two of my ministry.

You know things get busy, and someone tells you something, and you say you will pray for them, and you forget. And I remember being ashamed to let the person know that I had forgotten; I was ashamed of what they would think of me, as their pastor, if they knew that I had not prayed for them like I said I was going to.

I remember doing things like, "'Oh Lord, there's Susan; please be with her.' Hey Susan, I've been praying for you, how are you doing?" I've done that before to save face.

I don't do it (at least very often) anymore. In fact, if you ask me to pray for you, I will often say, "Hey, that's awesome; could we pray right now?" See, that's a learned behavior. I know that if we pray right now, I'll remember it. And if I tell you I'll pray later I might forget. Sometimes it's easy for me to get caught up in what's important in my life to the point where I kind of down play the other people around me.

You see it on Tuesday mornings sometimes here at St. Luke. Tuesday we have a home school group in our building, and anyone who works in the church office knows you need to shut the door and kind of hide behind your desk if you want to get anything done on Tuesdays.

And if, heaven forbid, you need coffee (which is out in the hall, and you have to come out from behind your desk and behind like, three different closed doors) then the way to get coffee on Tuesdays—this is just how it works—the way to get coffee at St. Luke on Tuesday is to keep your head down and go as quickly as you can to the coffee and try not to make eye contact so you can get back to your important job that you have as pastor.

The good news is that most of the people out in the hallway are trying to work on their computers and they don't really want to be bugged by a pastor anyway. So we both ignore each other quite effectively most Tuesdays.

Maybe four or five weeks ago I had that terrible need for coffee on a Tuesday morning and so I kind of went out in my defensive position and there was a woman who was heading down the hall away from the coffee who said something to me in passing. So I noticed her and actually made eye contact with her, and she said something like, "Yeah, I needed to get that morning caffeine."

And I said, "Oh, yeah; I need to get my coffee! So you like coffee, too?" She replied, "No, no; I don't drink coffee, but I needed caffeine this morning!" And that was fine because she was moving away from me, so I was safe. We had that interchange and I knew I was not going to need to talk to her again.

So in the time it took me to fill up my coffee mug, she turned around and started walking back in my direction. And I found that I actually had a conscious decision I had to make. Do I put my head down, or do I re-engage this woman who has already engaged me?

And I don't know if it was because I was getting ready for this sermon series, or because of a sermon I heard Pastor Matt preach that week—I don't know, if you have gotten this idea that over the last couple of years at St. Luke, we have actually been trying to encourage you in relationships, so therefore, we've been trying to live out this fundamental idea that Jesus puts people in our lives and that, if we were paying attention, He does stuff.

And so I took a deep breath, and here's my opening gambit: "So what's your caffeine of choice?" And she went, "Huh?" So things are going really well so far, right? I said, "Well, earlier you said you needed some caffeine, and you said you didn't like coffee, so I was just wondering how you usually got your morning caffeine." And she said, "Oh, I don't really ..."

Now I'm in the middle of a conversation I really don't need to be in. There are six e-mails that need to be finished and I've got a sermon I'm working on. And I better go get the budget ready, but she begins talking: "I don't really do caffeine very often. I guess if I really have to, I usually do Diet Coke. It's just that I haven't been sleeping very well lately, so I've been having a Diet Coke in the morning for the last week or so."

I found I have a second conscious decision to make. I could have said, "Oh, OK; thanks... Would you like a Diet Coke?" And instead, I took a deep breath and I said, "You know, when I find I'm not sleeping very well, it's usually because I'm worried about something important..."

And she said, "Yeah, you know, we are moving again. We have moved four times in the last six years. My husband is already living down in Ohio, which means I've got all four kids to myself.

In fact, the last time we moved, all four kids were under the age of four, and we had one of them between houses. And moving has always been stressful, and we are doing it again, and I am kind of anxious and nervous about a lot of things.”

At that point I didn’t say—I did NOT say, “Wow. When I moved to Texas, you should have seen what happened to us!”

Instead I said something like, “That sounds pretty hard.” And she said, “Yeah, it has been a couple weeks of real struggle, and the anxiety has got me up at night, so I’m drinking Diet Coke in the morning.”

And I didn’t say: “I’ll be praying for you.” Because I knew that was a promise that I might not keep. I said to her, “I think Jesus said something about bringing burdens and cares to Him. Would you mind if we prayed together, right now?” And she said, “Sure.”

So I had just gone out to get my coffee, but I ended up praying with a woman I didn’t know at all. We prayed for her husband and his work down in Ohio, and we prayed for her kids who were really on her heart. We prayed for rest that night and for peace of mind.

That felt pretty good: to put her agenda above mine; to be open to her and her needs; to not be quite so worried about what I needed to get back to at my desk.

Now, as it turned out, she finished the conversation by telling me about her pastor, and how much she liked him, and how he was also named Justin, and how she was going to worship that week. I think she wanted to make sure I knew that, just because I had prayed with her, I didn’t need to, like, invite her to become a member of St. Luke. She wasn’t buying what I was selling. But I wasn’t really selling anything, so we just got to talk about her church a little bit, too.

So I find that there are times when I really struggle with being open to other people, to see them as real people with real needs, instead of just people that fit into my agenda one way or another. Either they are a threat to my agenda, or they are helping me get my agenda done, or they just don’t really count. I sometimes experience myself seeing people that way.

Every once in a while, I actually am open to people. I actually care what they are experiencing and I care about what’s going on in their life, even more than I care about my life.

See, I wasn’t concerned in that moment when I asked the woman if we could pray; I wasn’t worried about looking foolish because I started the whole conversation with, “What’s your caffeine of choice?” (Not high on my list of effective ways of starting conversations.)

I wasn’t really worried in that moment about looking foolish in someone else’s eyes; I was just worried about *her*, and I didn’t really care if I looked foolish or not. That wasn’t important.

So sometimes I'm pretty closed and pretty self-centered; and sometimes I'm pretty open, and I think that is a lot more fun. And that is kind of what's at the heart of what we are talking about today.

How do we live out our lives as broken, fallen, sinful people who still are redeemed and belong to Jesus in a way that doesn't turn us off to people, but opens us up to other people? How do we get more of the second, and less of the first?

## **2. WE (how the topic affects the range of people gather together today)**

Because if I'm experiencing that, I know that you are experiencing it too, right? I mean, we can be honest with each other. You have those times in your life where you would like to put your head down and go get your coffee without having to look at the person in the cubicle next to you. And just getting coffee can be a dangerous thing, because someone might actually say something to you in the hallway.

You know what that is like. You know what that is like in the grocery store or in the gas station line, or at a family gathering where you keep circling to the other end of the room so that one family member doesn't engage you in conversation. You know what that's like.

St. Augustine in the early church had a way of talking about our status and the way we behave as fallen, sinful beings. He said it is like we are "*incurvatus in se*," which, when translated from the Latin means, "a circle turned in on itself."

As human beings, according to our sinful, fallen nature, we are naturally circles turned in on ourselves. We want to defend ourselves; we value other people in as much as they help us; we protect ourselves and put our own selves first. Our intention, our attitude, our desires, turn inward naturally.

Did you know Martin Luther was an Augustinian Monk, and so he was building on some of Augustine's work? Luther would go on to say, even in our relationship with God, we approach it as circles turned in on ourselves. We only have a relationship with God, we only desire him naturally in so far as he does something good for us. As long as God is answering our prayers and giving us the things we thought He should give us, we are on fine terms with God. And as soon as he doesn't give us what we wanted all along—well, then we have a real problem with our relationship with God, because ultimately, as fallen human beings, our relationship with God is motivated by self-interest. We are naturally circles turned in on ourselves.

And yet, even as fallen, sinful people, we do experience those moments where we are open to other people in a way that makes our agenda take a back seat. Where, as Paul says in Philippians, we take the same attitude of Christ Jesus, where we humble ourselves because we view other people as more important than ourselves.

So how do you get less of the first and more of the second? How do you take a step forward? How do you actually be open and be kind to people in your everyday life, when we are naturally circles turned in on ourselves? I think that is where the text for today, that story from Luke, helps us out quite a bit.

### **3. GOD (Letting God's Word inform our experience)**

I love this story. Jairus, the text tells us, is a synagogue leader. He's an important guy. He is a CEO of the local synagogue. And Jesus in Luke has already gotten into some trouble with the religious leaders.

So I have to imagine that the disciples are thinking, "Man, if this thing comes through with Jairus, we can maybe get past some of the early hiccups we've had in our career. If Jesus can just heal this synagogue leader, this CEO's daughter, well then, we are going to kind of take a step forward here in the mission and ministry of Jesus." I wonder if the disciples are focused on how, perhaps, this could affect their status. If so, they are not thinking much about this woman who interrupts Jesus and who, from their perspective, really brings nothing at all to the table.

But Jesus stops and says, "Somebody touched me." And you can hear the exasperation in Peter's voice: "Jesus, I mean, there are people like, stepping on your toes all around and we're all huddled together, and what you mean, somebody touched your robe?! Let's get on to the important business of healing this important man's daughter, Jesus! Keep focused here. We've got a real opportunity!"

But Jesus takes time out to draw attention to this woman—a woman who, because of her bleeding, should not have been there at all. It wasn't allowed by ceremonial law for her to touch Jesus; otherwise, she would make him unclean.

For this woman, who had no social standing at all, Jesus stops and says, "Hold on, time out. I know you all have some business to do, and I know I said that I would go with the CEO and see what I could do for his daughter, but there is someone here who's just as important to me." He stops the crowd, and the woman finds herself called out.

Did you notice what she did? The second time that Jesus says, "Who touched me?" she feels like she has been caught red-handed. She comes forward and tells her story; she justifies her own actions. She says why she touched him, and why she did what she did. She comes trembling in fear because she knows this Rabbi is going to get her good for interrupting his busy day.

And although she comes expecting condemnation and law, what Jesus gives here is nothing but gospel. "Your faith has healed you," he says.



You see, Jesus was interested in that woman. Jesus broke the circle turned in on itself. Jesus places this woman, who was at the margins of society, higher on his agenda than his own reputation or social standing. Jesus values her specifically, individually, personally.

In fact, nothing matters more to Jesus in that moment than this woman and her well-being. Not just the physical healing of her body, but her restoration into society and relationship. And that fact, that Jesus valued this woman, that he took time with her, must have been a shock to the crowds. It was certainly confusing to the disciples. And you get the impression that it had the potential to break a father's heart.

Jairus, in the kind of self-centeredness that only comes with great need, must have been going out of his mind while Jesus took time with this insignificant woman. I mean, his daughter was *dying*. Jesus had said he would come and heal her, and now Jesus gets sidetracked with someone else's problems.

"But what about *me*, Jesus? What about *my* needs? Don't *I* matter to you, too? Certainly this little girl near death is more important than a woman who has been struggling with this problem for *thirteen years*. Just give it, like, another week."

"Jesus, come on, get your priorities straight. Help me in my need right now. Because my daughter is more important right now rather than that woman is."

And then Jairus gets confirmation of his deepest fears. Jesus has delayed too long. His daughter is dead.

What Jesus says to Jairus next, He says to you; He says to me; He says to anyone who has ever asked that question: "What about *me* Jesus? What about *my* needs? Don't you care?"

To Jairus and to every individual crying out for affirmation and a sense of value, Jesus says: "Don't be afraid. I'm going with you. And the story isn't over yet."

#### **4. YOU (Application of God's Word to individuals)**

That's the secret. That's the promise. That's the hope of breaking your circle turned in on itself, and being open to other people in a way that genuinely values them.

Does it feel like God is answering everyone's prayer but yours?  
Don't be afraid. Jesus is going with you. And the story isn't over yet.

Do you feel like, if you don't stand up for your rights or religious freedoms, no one else will?  
Don't be afraid. Jesus is going with you. And the story isn't over yet.

Does it seem like our culture is spinning out of control and your voice is being lost in a sea of competing worldviews? Don't be afraid. Jesus is going with you. And the story isn't over yet.

Does it feel like you have to defend yourself or even take someone else down a notch just so you don't get trampled? Don't be afraid. Jesus is going with you. And the story isn't over yet.

Do you feel a need to answer every question and correct every misunderstanding? Do you need to be better than other people so you can feel good about yourself? Are your thoughts and feelings telling you your actions are justified, even though they tear other people down?

What Jesus said to Jairus, he says again today to you: "There is no one I value more than you. Don't be afraid. I am going with you. And the story isn't over yet."

## 5. WE (Looking to the future together)

When we live out of our own natural tendencies, we're nothing more than circles turned in on ourselves, using our relationships with other people and even using our relationship with God to try and make us feel better about ourselves.

But when we live out of the confidence that Jesus values us deeply and individually, we have the chance as a community to be open to people and value others even above ourselves.

What kind of church would we be if we lived out that confidence in the midst of all of the change we see around us? We might still feel marginalized. We might still struggle. Some will still walk away.

But the more we engage in people not like us with openness and confidence and genuine kindness, the more they will experience Jesus through us.

This week, look for an opportunity to be open and genuine with someone who can't help you get more status, or more credit, or more money. Be interested in them just because they are unique and uniquely loved.

Jesus values you deeply and individually. You are justified by Jesus! You don't need to justify yourself.

In that confidence, you are free to break the circle; you are free to let go of having to look good, or be right, or not seem foolish. In the confidence that you are justified by Jesus, and only by him, you are free to:

*[The following list is taken from the discussion questions at the end of the Be Kind section of the 42 Seconds book by Carl Medearis.]*

- a. Go out of your way to look people in the eye and say hello.
- b. Acknowledge the people you normally fail to recognize.
- c. Refrain from giving answers and ask another question.
- d. Do a small act of kindness or thoughtfulness for someone. Just because.
- e. Get to know the kids of some of your friends and neighbors. Ask a question about them.  
Learn their names. Show that you see and value them.

This week, try treating others as if their agenda was more important than yours.  
And see what Jesus does with that. Amen.

**Real conversations involve  
really listening  
to the person and  
to the Holy Spirit.**

**42**  
SECONDS

## **Week 2: Be Present**

**Big Idea:** Paying real attention to real people leads us to be vulnerable enough to enter into genuine relationship. Because Jesus is enough, we can say, “I am enough,” and engage others authentically.

**Goal:** That the hearers pay real attention to Jesus and the person in front of them in order to enter into a moment with authentic relationship.

**Big Problem:** Our priorities and agenda are more important to us than other people are. Authentic relationship takes time and especially vulnerability, and we don’t want to be vulnerable.

**Big Promise:** Jesus truly present with us and for us enables us to be truly present for others. Jesus is enough to meet our need to feel valuable. Jesus with us means he is listening to others through us.

**Carl Quotes:** “So my new strategy, aligned a bit more with Jesus, is to exhibit patient listening in real-life conversations that go wherever the person and God want them to go” (65).

“Real conversations involve really listening, to the person and to the Holy Spirit” (63).

## Readings for Worship:

- Genesis 16: 7-14                      Hagar: "You are the God who sees me."
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21              As if God were making his appeal through us ...
- Mark 10: 17-31                      Rich Young Man

## Sermon 2: Multiple Story Structure

Brené Brown is mentioned in this section of the book and finds her way into this week's sermon. She identifies as a Researcher and Storyteller. Her webpage even says, "Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do." Working with a narrative text in Mark 10, a section of a book written by the storyteller Carl, who cites the Researcher and Storyteller Brené Brown, it seems like a Multiple Story Structure would align the sermon to the vibe of the "Be Present" section. For a synopsis of the structure, see <https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/textual/genre/narrative/multiple-story-structure/>.

## Sermon 2 Outline

### A. Jesus being truly present to the rich young man in Mark 10

Retell the story of Mark 10:17-51, especially noting Jesus' willingness to be vulnerable and the rich young man's unwillingness to be vulnerable.

### B. Brené Brown's story about vulnerability

Tell the story of Brené Brown, PhD researcher who discovered her own need for vulnerability. She has one of the top 5 most-viewed TED Talks of all time:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>.

### C. Jesus present in your attention for others

Share a story that describes 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: *"God is making his appeal through us."*  
See Carl Quotes and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *"We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God"* (*Life Together*, 99).

**Sermon 2 YouTube Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbplZ11jGkM>

**Prayer for the Week:**

Jesus, when you look at me, you truly see me. You see my failures;  
you see my sin; you see my shame.

And yet, when you see me, your heart goes out to me.  
With all my baggage, you still think I am worthy of love and belonging.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for forgiveness and undeserved love.  
Thank you for a new identity as your chosen follower.  
Thank you for your ongoing presence in my life.

I relinquish control of my faith journey to you again today:  
Jesus, take the initiative and make me receptive to following wherever you lead.

Today I will live in confidence that I am worthy of love and belonging in your eyes. Amen.

## **Sermon 2: Be Present Multiple Story Structure**

### **Introduction**

Much grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

I want to share three stories with you today. The first comes from Mark Chapter 10. It's the story of that rich young man who comes to Jesus. It's a story that helps us understand what it means to be vulnerable and, therefore, open to Authentic Relationships. And ultimately, it's a story that points us back to a Dependence on Jesus.

And then I want to tell you a little more about a woman, a PHD researcher and storyteller named Brené Brown. She has one of the five most-viewed TED talks of all time. And she did her research right at that intersection of vulnerability and Connection through Authentic Relationships.

And then I want to go back to something I talked to you about last Sunday: the conversation I had with a woman in our lobby during the middle of the week—just kind of a random conversation on a random day, but a moment that seemed to me to express what it meant to be open to somebody. But, as it turns out, I think it also gets at what Paul is talking about in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians passage for today, that we have been made “ambassadors for Christ.” That God himself is “making his appeal through us.” So I want to revisit that story again, in light of this second section of Carl's book.

### **A. Jesus being truly present to the rich young man in Mark 10**

So the first story comes from Mark Chapter 10. Jesus is leaving the area in which he has been teaching and performing miracles and preaching sermons, and this guy falls on his knees in front of him and says, “Rabbi, Good Rabbi, what must I do to be saved?”

And Jesus doesn't give the typical response that a good Rabbi would have given in his day. He doesn't give the 12-step approach to each of the commandments, how you might fulfill those commandments better and then, therefore, be truly one of his disciples.

Instead Jesus rattles off a list of the Ten Commandments. And did you notice, he didn't even get them all? He missed some important ones in the beginning about having no other gods and having no other idols in your life, about honoring God's name and hallowing the Sabbath day. And he even leaves a couple off at the end, too. Did you catch that? It's the coveting ones that Jesus kind of omits.

He gives probably the middle 6 or 7. Which Jesus says is probably a good place to start. And the rich young man says “Yeah, of course. I’ve been not murdering all my life. What else do you have for me?”

And then the text says something really specific and fundamentally important for us. The text says Jesus “looked at the man and loved him.” He gave him a hard look. He sized him up. He actually set aside his own agenda, his own traveling plans, his own preaching schedule, and he sees this man in front of him; and he looks at him, and he sees him for who he truly is.

And because he looks at him as an individual, and knows him as an individual, and loves him as an individual, Jesus invites this man into discipleship. It’s the same discipleship call that he gave to James, or Peter, or John that caused them to leave their fishing nets. It’s the same discipleship call that caused Matthew to leave his tax-collecting booth.

And yet Jesus also has something very specific for this specific man and this specific situation. Jesus sees what is getting in the way of an ongoing relationship with him, so he tells this rich young man, “Sell everything you have and give it to the poor. And, then come follow me.”

I like to think if this rich young man had responded the way the tax collector and the fishermen had, we would have figured out a way to have thirteen apostles instead of twelve. But he doesn’t. He goes away sad because he had much wealth.

I want to note a couple of things about that interaction with Jesus. The first is that Jesus himself is actually being open and vulnerable to this man. He is putting himself on the line. He is making an invitation; a really difficult invitation that Jesus knows full well is likely not to be received.

Jesus risks rejection from this young man in order to be open to Authentic Relationship with him. Jesus is vulnerable in a way that actually leads to the possibility of Authentic Relationship.

And that is precisely what the rich young man was not willing to do. You see, his money in the bank was what gave him a sense of security, a sense of belonging, a sense of confidence and stability. He wasn’t willing to become so vulnerable that he could only become dependent on Jesus. That was a price that was too high to pay. So because he is not willing to be vulnerable, he is not going to be able to enter into an authentic relationship with Jesus. At least not at this point.

You know the disciples are understandably amazed and surprised when Jesus says, “Man, it’s hard for rich people to get into heaven, to get into the Kingdom!” The disciples are taken back. I mean, if *this guy* who has not been murdering since he was a boy—if *this guy* who is obviously doing something right, because God has blessed him with his financial resources—if *this guy* can’t be saved, well then how can anyone be saved?



And Jesus doesn't let the disciples off the hook. He doesn't say, "Oh, don't worry about it." He doesn't say, "Well, yeah, this was a special case." Jesus actually makes it worse. Jesus admits, not only is it hard for someone who has money to actually trust and depend on him, he says it is outright impossible. "With man it is impossible."

And then comes the sentence that gives me hope for that young man because it gives me hope for me. "With man it is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God."

That's the first story. It helps us see how Jesus made himself vulnerable in order to enter into a relationship, and how, without dependence on Jesus, that relationship isn't possible in an ongoing way. In fact, for us it is not possible at all. And yet, Jesus promises, all things are possible for God.

### **B. Brené Brown's story about vulnerability.**

[You can find the whole TED Talk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o>  
Published 3 Jan 2011.]

That connection between vulnerability and openness is something that the PHD researcher and storyteller Brené Brown actually spent her career exploring. It became deeply personal for her as well.

At one point in her TED Talk, she says:

*... you know how there are people that, when they realize that vulnerability and tenderness are important, that they surrender and walk into it. A: that's not me, and B: I don't even hang out with people like that. For me, it was a yearlong street fight. It was a slugfest. Vulnerability pushed, I pushed back. I lost the fight, but probably won my life back.*

You see what started for Dr. Brown as a one-year research project on connection became a six-year research project on vulnerability. Based not only on her depth of research, but on her own personal experience, Brené Brown shares several insights into the relationship between vulnerability and connection that I think applies to our conversation for today.

Dr. Brown tells us that one of the ways we avoid vulnerability is to "make everything that's uncertain certain." We take anything that is messy in our life and try to clean it up. We take anything that is maybe open-ended or complex, and we try to simplify it. We take everything that is uncertain and make it certain. Brown says:

*Religion has gone from a belief in faith and mystery to certainty: I'm right—you're wrong—shut up. That's it. Just certain.*

*The more afraid we are, the more vulnerable we are, the more afraid we are. This is what politics looks like today. There's no discourse anymore. There's no conversation. There's just blame.*

*You know how blame is described in the research? A way to discharge pain and discomfort...*

I was struck by her reference to religion.

Do you know the kind of theological discussion she is describing? Have you seen them play out on Facebook? Have you maybe joined in on one on Twitter? Do you typically take the, “I’m right—you’re wrong—shut up” position when talking to someone who doesn’t fully agree with you on every aspect of your faith?

I am not suggesting that we should practice doubt a little bit more in our lives, or that somehow you should be less certain about the promises that you have in Jesus, or even that the theology we believe, teach, and confess is not solid and sure.

I do not want you to be less certain, but I do want to notice the fact that when we shut down a conversation with a pat answer, even if it is a correct answer—if we shut a conversation down with a pat answer, we have lost the opportunity to actually see the person in front of us, to hear what they are thinking and what they are going through. We lose the chance to be vulnerable and then, therefore, open to connection with the real person in front of us. And one thing I am convinced of when I read the story of Jesus is that connection in an authentic relationship is absolutely essential when talking to someone about following him.

It’s not like theology is not important, but having good theology AND an open and authentic relationship with the real person in front of you is absolutely essential if you want to talk to them about Jesus.

Brené Brown continues to describe how we try to avoid vulnerability. She says we try to make everything look perfect:

*And we perfect, most dangerously, our children. Let me tell you what we think about children. They’re hardwired for struggle when they get here. And when you hold those perfect little babies in your hand, our job is not to say, ‘Look at her, she’s perfect. My job is just to keep her perfect — make sure she makes the tennis team by fifth grade and Yale by seventh grade.’ That’s not our job.*

*Our job is to look and say, ‘**You know what? You’re imperfect, and you’re wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging.**’ That’s our job. ...*

I love how Brené puts it: “You know what? You’re imperfect, and you’re wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging.” That’s what I want to say to my kids. That’s what I want to say to my church. That’s what I want my church to say to their pastor.

Ultimately, I think that's what Jesus wants to say to you today: *"You know what? You're imperfect, and you're wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging."*

Jesus—do you get that?—*Jesus* thinks you are worthy of love and belonging.

Just as he looked at that messed up young man who is outwardly perfect but confused, and loved him just as he was, in the same way Jesus looks at you and your life and your mess, and your priorities, and your beauty, and your sin, and your shame, and he knows you and he loves you and he is fully present for you.

Jesus makes himself vulnerable again to you today even though he knows you might reject his invitation. He knows you might walk off, because you have done it before. But he makes himself open to you again and invites you into a deeper relationship with him. He takes that risk because he thinks you're worth it.

Jesus thinks you are worthy of love and belonging.

Dr. Brown ends her TED talk with a list of things we can do to experience a more authentic relationship and connection in our life. She says:

*This is what I have found: to let ourselves be seen, deeply seen, vulnerably seen; to love with our whole hearts, even though there's no guarantee ...*

*And the last, which I think is probably the most important, is to believe that we're enough. Because when we work from a place, I believe, that says, 'I'm enough,' then we stop screaming and start listening, we're kinder and gentler to the people around us, and we're kinder and gentler to ourselves.*

If Dr. Brown's research is right, if being able to say, "I am enough," is what it takes to connect authentically with other people, if being able to say, "I am enough," is what is essential to being open and vulnerable, then there's no reason why we, as followers of Jesus, can't be the most authentically connected and vulnerably open people on the face of the planet.

You want to know if you are enough, just the way you are? You want to know if you are enough, even with all your failures and your past history and personality defects?? You want to know if you, as an individual, are enough??? JESUS THINKS YOU ARE WORTHY OF LOVE AND BELONGING.

On your own, you don't have to be good enough or popular enough or promoted enough. Jesus died for you. Jesus rose for you. Jesus forgives you. Jesus is shaping you for his use in his kingdom. Jesus thinks you are worthy of love and belonging.

And *that* is enough to make you know you have a place. You have a place where you now have no doubt whether you belong or not. You can be confident in that love, not in your love and not in mine, but in his. Jesus thinks you are worthy of love and belonging.

And when you then begin to connect authentically with other people from that place of confidence, from knowing that Jesus died for you and, therefore, you matter—when you approach people with that confidence, when you are open to them, when you make yourself vulnerable, when you risk loving someone else or being kind to them even though they may not show love or kindness in return, when you risk that kind of vulnerability in order to enter into a real relationship, then you are following in the footsteps of Jesus, who loved this messed up world all the way to the cross.

Jesus made himself vulnerable, even to death on a cross, that he might be truly present for you. Do you want to know if you are enough? Jesus went to the cross because he wanted an eternal relationship with you. You can take that to the bank.

### **C. Jesus present in your attention to others, as if God were making his appeal through us.**

If you have been reading around in this *42 Seconds* book this week then you've heard Carl Medearis say some things like: *"My new strategy, aligned a bit more with Jesus, is to exhibit patient listening in real-life conversations that go wherever the person and God want them to go"* (65).

It kind of reminds me of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in his book, *Life Together*: *"We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God"* (99).

And all of that makes me think again of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, where he says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were making his appeal through us: be reconciled to God."

And while Paul is speaking as a founding pastor to his kind of struggling congregation, I think Paul would also admit that the ministry of the baptized is a ministry of reconciliation; that when you are in your workplace or your family or your neighborhood, you are the ones sent by God as ambassadors of Christ; that God is making his appeal through you in your everyday, ordinary lives.

And that helps me to understand the story I told you last week a little bit better. Remember, I told you I had a conversation with a woman, and it had kind of a rocky start because I didn't really want to be in conversation with her, and I'm not sure she wanted to be in conversation with me, but we somehow ended up talking.

I had to make a conscious decision whether I was going to be open to her or not, whether I was going to take time out of my agenda with her, whether I was going to let go of sermon preparation in order to have a conversation with this woman.

I had to decide to be open to her. But once I did, then I found something take place that I wasn't prepared for. Remember I said to her: "You know, whenever I have trouble sleeping, it is usually because I have a lot on my mind."

Looking back at that, I realized I was actually being vulnerable to her in that moment. I was letting her know that I sometimes have trouble sleeping, because I have a lot on my mind.

I know it was a small crack, just a little openness; it was a small dose of vulnerability, but she responded in kind. Because when I said that, she responded by telling me about her husband who is already living in Ohio and the 4 kids that she was taking care of while they were trying to sell their house. And about the 4 moves in 5 years and how that had been difficult for her. She took my invitation to vulnerability and opened herself up even more.

So maybe that is why it seemed natural for me to invite her into prayer—to say, "Hey, could we pray about that right now?" I mean, it seemed a little bit risky, and I am not in the habit of asking people I have never seen before if I can pray for them, but it seemed natural at the time.

I think what was going on was that, as I was listening to that woman, Jesus was present; that Jesus himself was listening to that woman through me. I think Jesus was hearing her struggle, Jesus was sharing in her pain, Jesus was opening his heart to this woman by opening my heart to her, as well.

So when I prayed for her, when I asked her to pray, it was no longer just me on my own trying to do the best I could to be a good pastor and Jesus-follower, but it was the Spirit of Jesus himself, the one who intercedes with groans that are too deep for words. It was the words of the Spirit of Jesus that he prayed through me for that person.

Because I found myself not praying a little prayer I had written down and had in my pocket – just in case. I didn't pray something out of the Lutheran Service Book. I didn't pray a pre-made prayer, but I simply spoke words from my heart for that person through Jesus. And I think the Spirit was active in that moment, praying for her as well.

## **Conclusion**

So this week, as you encounter the people around you, as you kind of try to figure out what it means to be just a little bit vulnerable or open to someone, would you please imagine what it might be like, would you look for an opportunity, will you be aware of the Spirit active in you? Because the Spirit is active through you, as well.

Will you look for a conversation where you can say something that feels a little risky, where you can make an invitation that might be turned down, where you can invite someone into prayer even though the response might be, “Are you crazy? Are you one of those Christian folk?”

Would you look for a time when you can be open, when you can be vulnerable, when you can take a next step into a relationship with someone in your life because that is what Jesus is inviting you to do?

Will you join me in trying to practice Carl’s non-strategy strategy, to be open to real life conversations with the person in front of you and let that conversation go wherever that person and the Holy Spirit want the conversation to go? Because I think you will find that, because Jesus is truly present for you, Jesus is truly present through you, for the sake of the people around you. Amen.

**Speak out of a heart  
that genuinely cares.  
Trust God  
to take care of the rest.**

**42**  
SECONDS

## **Week 3: Be Brave**

**Big Idea:** Fear of giving or taking offense can keep us from engaging others whose first barrier to knowing and trusting Jesus may be knowing and trusting a Christian. Jesus uses us and rescues us as he brings OUR story, THEIR story, and HIS story into an intersection of grace.

**Goal:** That the hearers hold their story, the story of people in the culture around them, and the story of Jesus together in order to see Jesus at work in grace.

**Big Problem:** We live in a culture of distrust. Christians naturally avoid people who don't trust Christians, or go on the offensive and attack them. For their part, people who grow up in that kind of culture won't tend to get to know and trust Jesus until they have gotten to know and trust a Christian.

**Big Promise:** Jesus restores you and releases you from the burden of having to get it right so people around you can be saved. Instead, Jesus saves you and then uses your story where it intersects with their story to bring his saving story into their lives and yours.

**Carl Quote:** "To speak out at a heart that genuinely cares. And then trust God to take care of the rest." (103)

## Readings for Worship:

- 1 Chronicles 11:12-14 Barley field reference
- Philippians 4:4-9 “Let your gentleness be evident to all.”
- Matthew 28:16-20 “As you go, disciple the nations ... and I am with you.”

## Sermon 3 Structure: Definition

I originally conceived of the Be Brave sermon as a Paradox Maintained structure: in order to follow Jesus, you need to hold on to both truth and people at the same time. But the more I worked with it, the more I wanted to hold three things together: YOUR story, THEIR story, and the story of Jesus. Viewing the topic as an intersection of three storylines rather than a tension between two sides of a paradox led to a different kind of sermon. Here I am trying to define what it means to live out the Great Commission; that definition has three distinct but overlapping components.

The thought flow is not Paradox Maintained (hold on to A and B without letting go of either), nor is it Process (you experience A, that leads to B, that leads to C); rather, the logic is that of Definition (to grasp X you need to know A, and B, and C, and understand how they fit together). For more on Definition as a sermon structure, visit: <https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/thematic/definition/>.

## Sermon 3 Outline

You live out the Great Commission at the gracious intersection of

### A. Your Story: “As you go...”

1. In a Culture of Distrust, the natural response to a fear of vulnerability is to attack.
2. The natural response to relational fear is to avoid any controversial topic altogether.

### B. Their Story: “... disciple the nations ...”

1. The first threshold people cross on their path to Jesus is trusting a Christian.
2. True bravery means serving people who naturally distrust you.

### C. The Story of Jesus: “...and I am with you always.”

1. For Jesus, bravery meant the opposite of ego.
2. Jesus uses *your story* where it intersects with *their story* to bring *his story* to both.

**Sermon 3 YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/RXBxIsThLyo>



## **Prayer for the Week**

Risen and ascended Lord, since you chose to enlist me in your mission,  
be faithful to your promise to be with me always.

Where my story intersects the story of another, let your story be present, too.  
When I encounter distrust from others, teach me to put my trust in you.  
As I strive for faithfulness, give me the gift of true bravery and bold love.

In every situation, give me wisdom to be silent; give me courage to speak;  
and give me genuine compassion for others, both in my silence and in my speech.

As the challenge of living daily as your follower increases, continue to invite me  
into deeper relationship with you. And to your name be the glory. Amen.

## Sermon 3: Be Brave

### Definition Structure

#### Introduction

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Great Commission gets lived out at the intersection of three stories.

Jesus says: “As you go,” ...

The Great Commission is connected to your story.

Jesus says: “As you go, disciples the nations,” ...

The Great Commission is connected to their story.

Jesus says: “As you go, disciples the nations, ... and I am with you always.”

The Great Commission is ultimately and irrevocably connected to the story of Jesus.

As Jesus sends you out into your everyday lives with his eyes and with his heart and with his words on your lips—as Jesus enlists you to engage in his ongoing work for the sake of the world—as you encounter people at Kroger, and Chile’s, and Huron High School, people for whom Christ died, the Great Commission gets lived out at the intersection of your story, their story, and the story of Jesus.

Faithfulness to Complex Truth means holding all three of those stories together at the same time.

#### A. YOUR STORY

“As you go,” Jesus says. As you go about your everyday, ordinary, seemingly inconsequential life, Jesus is using you to disciple the nations. And when your story intersects with the nations, sparks can fly.

Just look at what kind of culture Jesus is sending you into! It wasn’t too long ago that the Christian Worldview was respected, if not assumed. Not so any more.

Listen to how Don Everts and Doug Schaup describe the people they know and the culture around them in their book, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*: [cite page 31]

*In another day and age, God, religion and church enjoyed the general respect of the culture. Not today. Religion is suspect, church is weird, and Christians are hypocrites. Distrust has become the norm. People are tired of the “sales tactics” often employed by Christians and are offended by our bait-and-switch attempts at introducing them to*

*Jesus. In the past, the occupation of evangelist was viewed as a respectable profession, even by secular society. Today evangelist has fallen to the very bottom of the pit, among the most distrusted occupations.*

*When people first find out we are Christians, we often literally see them shift from relaxed to rigid, from warm to suspicious. This is because when our friends first hear us call ourselves “Christian,” several negative things often immediately flash through their minds: “Christians are self-righteous, and they always think they’re better than me.” “I’m about to be judged, so I better get my defenses up.” “Christians are always pressing politics, so watch out!”*

When your story intersects with a Culture of Distrust, a couple kinds of responses seem to come naturally. And both of our typical, knee-jerk responses are based on two different kinds of fear.

When your story intersects with a person who is naturally skeptical of your faith, you might naturally experience fear of looking foolish, fear of being vulnerable, fear of losing an argument, or being offended or even marginalized.

The natural response to a fear of vulnerability is to attack, to fight back. We noticed that kind of response last week, the “I’m right—you’re wrong—shut up” approach to theological conversation. Your friend says something that belittles your faith or your Jesus, and you throw the Good Book at him, blow him out of the water with some no holds barred, take no prisoners kind of apologetics. And it might not go well, but at least you will have defended your faith.

The other natural kind of fear in the face of a Culture of Distrust is of a different, more relational character. In an environment where people you know are naturally skeptical of your faith, you might be afraid of looking *mean* rather than *foolish*. You become more afraid of giving offense than taking it, of marginalizing others rather than of being marginalized. In this situation, you wouldn’t mind losing an argument nearly as much as you would losing a friend.

The natural response to relational fear is to avoid any controversial topic altogether. They can’t take offense at your faith if you never mention it. They won’t think you are close-minded if you remain close-lipped. And that might not go so well, either, but at least you will have kept a relationship intact.

When your story intersects with naturally skeptic people who grew up in a culture of distrust of everything, but especially of Christians, two different kinds of fears lead to two different kinds of response. I know which response is more typical for me. Which one is your go-to response? Attack or avoid? Fight or flight?

While either fight or flight can help you manage the discomfort you feel, neither serves the other person well. The Great Commission isn't simply lived out in the context of your story. The Great Commission invites you to think in terms of their story, to flip your perspective and see things also from their point of view.

## **B. THEIR STORY**

One of the things I really appreciate about that book, *I Once Was Lost*, is that it helps me see from the perspective of the Postmodern Skeptic before they have come to faith. It sheds light on what “the nations” are thinking as my story intersects with their story. Keep the people who live in your neighborhood in mind as you listen to this paragraph:

*When trust has not yet been established, lostness feels like wise skepticism and right thinking. If Christians are fanatical and narrow-minded, keeping one's distance seems like the smartest posture to take toward us. “There is something twisted about those smarmy Christians. And they want to fix me with that twisted agenda.” Until this framework of distrust is shifted, growth is nearly impossible. (32)*

Can you imagine viewing the world that way? Can you imagine viewing faith that way? Can you imagine viewing Christians that way?

Your story of faith intersects with the stories of people who naturally distrust faith of any kind, and who especially distrust “church people.” And the first threshold people like that have to cross on their path to Jesus is simply trusting a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

Let me say that again. For people raised in a culture of skepticism and distrust, the first threshold they have to cross on their path to Jesus—the first thing standing in their way to faith—the first step on their journey of knowing and loving the One who knows and loves them first—the first threshold people in your culture have to cross in order to have a relationship with Jesus is trusting a Christian like you.

You know, there's that great section in the *42 Seconds* book about Eleazar, son of Dodai from 1 Chronicles 11 (75-79). You remember Eleazar, right? He was one of David's three Mighty Men, and he took a stand in a barley field against an advancing Philistine army, and by making that uncompromising stand, Eleazar turned the tide of the battle.

Carl Medearis uses the story of that barley field to talk about being brave, to talk about being willing to take a stand when it counts, and step out in faith even when the odds seem against you.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter THRESHOLD ONE: Trusting a Christian in *I Once Was Lost* by Everts and Schaup.

But Carl also cautions against using “bravery” as a cover for your own knee-jerk reactions. He writes, “Bravery isn’t bravery if your ego and need to be right get in the way” (74). That reminds me of those natural responses to distrust in our culture. Since one natural tendency is to avoid conflict altogether, I wonder if we sometimes frame “bravery” as the opposite of avoiding a fight. Maybe *Christian bravery* simply becomes the label for when we attack instead of avoid, when choose fight over flight.

But Carl won’t let us get away with that kind of simplistic view. “Bravery isn’t bravery if your ego and need to be right get in the way,” he says. And then he goes on: “True bravery is bold love. True bravery is being like Jesus” (74).

You might say it this way: being brave does not mean taking a stand in every barley, corn, or soybean field that comes your way. Being brave means serving people who naturally distrust you. *Being brave means serving people who naturally distrust you.*

If your focus is only on YOUR STORY, then when your story intersects with the story of someone who has been shaped by a culture of distrust, you are going to naturally respond out of fear. Without giving it a second thought, you will likely either attack or avoid that person and their perspective.

But if you can hold YOUR STORY together with THEIR STORY, then you can begin to imagine the world from their point of view. You can begin to serve someone who’s first step on the journey of faith is to cross the threshold of trusting a Christian like you.

Being brave means holding that other person in **prayer** before God instead of **defending** every theological position every chance you get. Being brave means being **genuinely interested** in their story and their perspective instead of **taking immediate offense** every time they show their natural skepticism.

Being brave means actually going out of your way to **meet them on their turf**, and finding opportunities to **invite them into your life**, instead of **avoiding** or **arguing** at every opportunity.

Being brave will sometimes mean taking a stand, even if you have to stand alone; and true bravery also means letting go of your natural tendency to **judge** others, and finding “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise—” finding those kinds of things in the lives of your non-Christian friends and coworkers and family members and **affirming them** whenever and wherever possible, because their first and best chance of getting to know Jesus just might be getting to know someone like you.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The dichotomies in this section are discussed in-depth in *I Once Was Lost* by Everts and Schaup.

I'm not saying it's easy; in fact, it can be almost overwhelmingly hard. Holding on to YOUR STORY and THEIR STORY at the same time is a pretty high challenge. And Jesus knows it is. That's why he doesn't leave you to your own devices.

"As you go," Jesus says, "disciple the nations ... And behold! I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The Great Commission is all about your story. The Great Commission is all about their story. But most importantly, the Great Commission is all about HIS story.

### **C. The Story of Jesus**

Jesus knows what it means to stand alone. Jesus knows what it's like to be vulnerable, to be marginalized, to be under attack. Jesus knows what it is like to have people he cares about turn away simply because he spoke the truth and they didn't like it.

For Jesus, bravery meant the opposite of ego; true bravery meant making himself a servant, submitting even to death on a cross, for the sake of people who didn't trust him, wouldn't agree with his theology, and thought his twisted agenda was a threat to their way of life.

Jesus knows your fear of looking foolish. Jesus knows your fear of looking narrow-minded. Jesus knows your natural tendency to attack or to avoid. And still Jesus loves you, still Jesus forgives you, still Jesus chooses to accomplish his mission not only to you, but through you into the lives of the people around you.

Jesus takes your story and he weaves it into the stories of people who are far away from him. At that intersection of your story and their story, His story is present and active.

By the waters of your baptism, Jesus commissions you and sends you out into a culture that won't naturally trust you any more than it naturally trusted him. And that is scary. But it is also exciting! Because it's not about you. Your story isn't the most important thing going on in your life. There are people in your life who may never come to know and trust Jesus if they don't come to know and trust someone like you first.

And instead of that being an overwhelming challenge that makes you never want to get out of bed for fear of messing it up, your story becomes an adventure of discovery, an adventure of seeking other people's stories and wondering about how Jesus is connecting them to his story through your story.

And when you find your natural knee-jerk response back in full force, when you find yourself attacking or avoiding people who naturally distrust you, when you notice patterns of judging others, and taking offense at their skepticism, and trying to make every disagreement a hill to die on, you take all that back to the cross and leave it there.

Jesus knows your failure. Jesus knows your fear. Jesus restores you and releases you of the burden of having to get it right so the people around you can be saved.

Instead, Jesus saves you first, and saves you again and again; and then he uses your story and where it intersects with their story to bring his saving story into their lives and yours.

The Great Commission gets lived out at the intersection of your story (As you go...), their story (disciple the nations...), and the story of Jesus (I am with you always, to the end of the age). Faithfulness to Complex Truth means holding all three of those stories together at a single intersection of grace. Amen.

# We follow Jesus right into the humility of dependence

42  
SECONDS

## Week 4: Be Jesus

**Big Idea:** Jesus is absolutely unique. And, in the power of the Spirit, you are absolutely like him.

**Goal:** That the hearers recognize the places they are not like Jesus so that they more fully embrace their vocation of “being Jesus” to the people around them.

**Big Problem:** We claim Jesus without knowing Jesus. We think of Jesus’ activity as being beyond us. We have the Spirit, but don’t think, talk, act, pray, believe as if Jesus were present in us for the world.

**Big Promise:** Jesus, the unique Spirit-bearer and Lamb of God, uniquely restores your relationship with God, so that you now also receive and bear his Spirit for the sake of others.

**Carl Quotes:** Jesus “actually invites us to the same kind of deep, connected knowing of himself that he had with his father” (124). “We will follow (Jesus) right into the humility of dependence” (137).

### Readings for Worship:

Joel 2:28-32 The Pentecost promise of the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:14-21 The Spirit causes Christ to dwell in you by faith.

John 14: 8-20 In dependence on the Father, Jesus promises the Spirit and sends the disciples.



## **Sermon Structure: Comparison/Contrast**

The directive to “be Jesus” automatically sets up a kind of comparison between Jesus and the people who are asked to talk, think, live, and love like he did. The Comparison/Contrast structure lets the sermon address ways we are *not* like Jesus in order to help the hearers see the ways in which we are. In this case, the sermon moves from part to part, rather than from whole to whole; the ways we are like and not like Jesus are considered one at a time rather than all together.

The images used in the sermon develop the comparison/contrast structure rather than providing the shape of the sermon itself. In other words, the dynamic of comparison and contrast drives the sermon forward; the images add depth along the way. For more on the Comparison/Contrast structure see: <https://concordiatheology.org/sermon-structs/thematic/comparisoncontrast/>.

## **Sermon 4 Outline**

**Introduction:** Jesus must be cheating: he is God and human. How am I supposed to be like that?

### **A. Jesus receives the Spirit (and so do I)**

Like Jesus at his baptism and the disciples at Pentecost, I receive and carry the Spirit, although Jesus is uniquely the anointed Messiah.

### **B. Driven by the Spirit, Jesus brings the Kingdom in intimate dependence on the Father (and so do I)**

The foot washing is just one example of Jesus serving in the power of the Spirit and under the authority of the Father. Jesus invites us into intimate knowing as well as active dependence.

### **C. Jesus lives the human life the way God intended humans to live (and so do I, except ...)**

Jesus lived his life as a human being filled with the Spirit. Jesus was in a human culture and crossed cultural divides, like with the woman at the well. I also live out my calling as a Spirit-filled human, though imperfectly.

### **D. Jesus is the sinless atonement for all sin (and I need that)**

As true God and true man, Jesus’ unique job description at the cross was to be the Lamb of God and carry away my sin in a way I never could. Discipleship also includes bearing your cross daily, but not as payment for sin.

**Conclusion:** Jesus is absolutely unique and, in the power of the Spirit, you are absolutely like him.

**YouTube Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNS1NqMMiog>

**Prayer for the Week:**

Holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus, fill me again today. Drive me back to dependence on Jesus; cultivate in me a longing for his word; make Jesus present to me, and make Jesus present through me to the world around me.

Lord Jesus, pour out your Spirit on me again today. Share with me the same kind of intimate connection you have to the Father. As you were sent out, send me out; as you served with humility, invite me into the humility of dependence.

Heavenly Father, hear the prayers of your Spirit for me again today. Expand your kingdom and glorify your name in me and through me. As your cherished child, I commit my day to your service and to your glory. Amen.

## Sermon 4: Be Jesus

### Comparison/Contrast Structure

#### Introduction

“Jesus must be cheating.”

I know—that doesn’t sound very pious. But I think that, whether we are consciously aware of it or not, our typical response to any suggestion that we emulate Jesus, or imitate Jesus, or be conformed to the image of Jesus for the sake of others—any time we are invited to “be Jesus,” I think that we think: “Jesus must be cheating.”

I mean, Jesus is so loving, he is so kind, he is so powerful yet humble. Of course he is going to resist temptation! Of course he’s going to lay down his life for his friends! Of course Jesus can do all kinds of miraculous signs of the Kingdom, and love his enemies, and save the world: he’s God, for crying out loud!

So when I am asked to do any of the things Jesus did, when I am called on to resist temptation, or to love my enemies, or humbly engage in the powerful work of the Kingdom, my first reaction is to let myself off the hook by seeing the God/Man Jesus and saying, “Of course Jesus can do that! He’s God. And I’m not.”

In other words, Jesus must be cheating: sneaking in a little divine power to resist the devil; pulling off a second-person-of-the-Trinity magic trick to point to the Kingdom; playing his God-in-the-flesh card whenever the going got too tough for his flesh.

So when Carl Medearis or anybody else invites me to “be Jesus,” I take that invitation with a grain of salt. I mean, I can be maybe a little bit like Jesus once in a while, but he’s God, and if I’m honest, I kind of think that gets me off the hook.

The only problem with downplaying Carl’s invitation to “be Jesus” is that Jesus makes much the same invitation: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”<sup>3</sup>

“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”<sup>4</sup>

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these...”<sup>5</sup>

If JESUS thinks I should be like Jesus, then maybe I need to reconsider who exactly this Jesus is, and how exactly I am supposed to be like him.

---

<sup>3</sup> John 20:21

<sup>4</sup> John 13:34

<sup>5</sup> John 14:12

## A. Jesus receives the Spirit (and so do I)

One of the defining features about Jesus is that he is the Messiah, the Christ. That title—Messiah in Hebrew, Christ in Greek—simply means “The Anointed One.” Jesus is the promised Anointed One, the special representative of Yahweh who would receive and bear the very Spirit of God.

I like this **[Image of the Baptism of Jesus]**<sup>6</sup> because it captures the descent of the Holy Spirit. Remember, when Jesus was anointed at his baptism, he was named the beloved Son of God, and the Spirit descended on him like a dove. Jesus came to the waters where people were being baptized for repentance. Jesus stood in the place of sinners to fulfill all righteousness. And Jesus was declared the unique and beloved Son, who received the Holy Spirit and lived out the rest of his ministry carrying the special presence of that Spirit.

So in the one sense, you are not like Jesus at all. He is the unique Christ of God, the anointed Messiah, God’s one and only Son. But in another sense, precisely because Jesus stood in the place of sinners—because Jesus took *your* place, Jesus invites you to take *his* place. Because Jesus received and carried the Holy Spirit in a unique way, he became the one who was authorized to pour out the Spirit on all people, universally.

That’s what’s going on at Pentecost: Jesus himself, the Anointed One, the Anointed-with-the-Spirit One, is pouring out his Spirit on his followers. I love this baptism image because it could be the baptism of Jesus, with the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, or it could be Pentecost, with tongues of red fire dancing in the blowing of the Spirit wind.

It looks as if this person is almost inhaling, or drinking deeply of the Spirit. It reminds me of what Paul would later write: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”<sup>7</sup>

So although Jesus was uniquely baptized as the unique Son of God who uniquely bears the Spirit, you have now also been baptized. You have been named beloved daughter, beloved son. The same Holy Spirit that filled Jesus at his baptism now fills you. Today is Pentecost renewed again; every day, you walk in the power of your baptism; every breath, you breathe the wind and Spirit of God; every moment you drink in life, you drink of the one Spirit that empowered the life of Jesus the Messiah.

---

<sup>6</sup> “Come Holy Spirit,” <https://jesuspaintings.deviantart.com/art/Come-holy-spirit-jesus-paintings-624727075> by Lance Brown, <https://www.paintedchrist.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13.

This painting by Lance Brown is simply titled, “Come, Holy Spirit.” It could be a picture of Jesus at his baptism; it could be a picture of the disciples at Pentecost; it could be a picture of you, today.

Jesus was anointed with the power of the Spirit. And so are you.

[Return to Background Image]

### **B. Driven by the Spirit, Jesus brings the Kingdom in intimate dependence on the Father (and so do I)**

You know what happens right after Jesus’ baptism, right? The Spirit drives Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.<sup>8</sup> That’s right. The Spirit is now in charge. So that when Jesus faces temptation, he isn’t fighting with his power as God. Jesus resists temptation the same way you and I are supposed to resist temptation: Jesus resists temptation as a human being who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

In fact, everything that Jesus does to bring the Kingdom reign of God from that point forward is done in the power of the Holy Spirit and under the authority of the Father.

After the temptation, Luke writes: “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, ... he taught in their synagogues ... [Jesus] unrolled the scroll [of the prophet Isaiah] and found the place where it was written,

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.’ ”<sup>9</sup>

And he says, “That was written about me!”

Jesus does what he does only in the power of the Spirit. And time and time again Jesus speaks of his dependence on the Father. “I do nothing on my own authority,” Jesus said, “but I speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone.”<sup>10</sup> Or again: “The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”<sup>11</sup>

Whatever Jesus is doing to bring the Kingdom, from his most miraculous sign to his most humble service, Jesus always is working in the power of the Spirit and under the authority of the Father.

---

<sup>8</sup> Luke 4:1

<sup>9</sup> Luke 4:14-19

<sup>10</sup> John 8:28-29.

<sup>11</sup> John 14:10.

One of my favorite examples of this kind of humble and dependent service is the foot washing in the Upper Room. **[Foot Washing Image]** John tells us: “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.”<sup>12</sup>

Because Jesus was confident of his relationship with God the Father, because Jesus knew his future as the Anointed-with-the-Spirit One, Jesus was able to serve. Jesus serves in the power of the Spirit and under the authority of the Father.

In that same Upper Room, while the disciples’ toes were still squeaky clean, Jesus will promise his followers that same Spirit, and invite us into that same intimate dependence on the Father: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth... On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”<sup>13</sup>

So Carl can write: Jesus “actually invites us to the same kind of deep connected knowing of himself as he had with his father.”<sup>14</sup> Isn’t that amazing? The intimate knowing that exists within the Trinity from eternity is open and available to you, a sinful human being, because you also bear the Holy Spirit and live under the authority of the Father, all for the sake of Jesus.

No, you are not an eternal part of the eternal God the same way Jesus is. And, as a human being, Jesus lived out his own life in dependence on the Spirit and under the authority of the Father. When Carl asks you to Be Jesus, he doesn’t want you to imagine you are divine; quite the contrary. If we want to Be Jesus, Carl says, “We will follow [Jesus] right into the humility of dependence.”<sup>15</sup>

[Return to Background Image]

### **C. Jesus lives the human life the way God intended humans to live (and so do I, except ...)**

When I think of Jesus using his divine power to fight temptation, or perform signs of the Kingdom, or even to submit himself to the Father’s will, it seems, just a little, like Jesus is cheating.

But what if Jesus isn’t living as God among humans? What if Jesus is living as a human, the way God intended humans to live? That might actually be a more faithful representation of the biblical witness.

---

<sup>12</sup> John 13:3-4.

<sup>13</sup> John 14:16-17a, 20.

<sup>14</sup> *42 Seconds*, 124.

<sup>15</sup> *42 Seconds*, 137.

I mean, I know Jesus is God; you know Jesus is God; Jesus knows he is eternal God from eternity. But when the second person of the Trinity walks among us, he walks and talks and struggles and suffers and loves and grieves and bleeds as a human among humans, as a human the way God intended them to be.

So when we see Jesus interacting with the woman at the well [**Jesus with the Samaritan Woman at the Well Image**]<sup>16</sup> we see one real human being from one human culture interacting with another human being from a similar but very different human culture.

I love this version of the Woman at the Well. It comes from the “Jesus Mafa project.” The Mafa villages in Cameroon, Africa sat with the biblical text, and acted out what they heard. That interaction with God’s Word led to a series of paintings from the life of Christ, as if Jesus had come into a Mafa village in Cameroon.

That whole project contextualizes the Gospel in the culture of people for whom Christ died. In fact, while Jesus came in, with, and under a very specific human culture at a very specific time and place, his promise is intended to cross all cultural barriers.

So to the Samaritan woman at the well, outcast from her own culture, this Jewish Jesus from a very different culture speaks of living water that he will pour out on all people. He speaks of drinking in and being filled with the Spirit and being sought by the Father. This Jesus, as a human being, crosses human divides in order to bring human beings into contact with the Father and the Spirit.

And so do you.

As a follower of Jesus, your job description is to receive and carry the same Spirit Jesus received and carried; your job description is to live the same kind of human life and cross the same kind of human barriers that he crossed; your job description is to bring other human beings into the intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit that Jesus makes possible for you.

---

<sup>16</sup> Jesus with the Samaritan Woman at the Well, <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48282>  
The Jesus MAFA project, responses to the Gospels acted out by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa, with paintings depicting the life of Christ as if it had taken place in a Mafa village.

“In the 1970s Mafa Christians in North Cameroun wanted to have pictures of the Gospel using their own cultural resonances. With the help of French missionaries they acted out the scenes, and sketches of the plays were worked up by French artists and given back to them – and to the world. More than 6 million copies have been distributed to date to 83 countries.” <http://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/13908904724/pictures-of-the-nativity-story-in-africa-jesus> ]

#### **D. Jesus is the sinless atonement for all sin (and I need that)**

And you know you don't do that well. You know you fail miserably at that job description more often than not. You know your life is so full of darkness and pain that you despair of ever reflecting even remotely the beauty of Jesus to the world.

And so you hear the invitation to be like Jesus, even to "be Jesus" to the people around you, and you see a perfect Jesus who has all the power of the Godhead behind him and you think, "It's easy for him! He's God! But I'm not brave or powerful or holy or perfect like that. Why even try?"

And you are right, at least in this regard. There is something Jesus is that you are not, and that you never could be. **[Crucifixion Image]**<sup>17</sup>

This statue of the crucifixion stands on the St. Charles Bridge in the city of Prague. The Latin letters above his head, INRI, stand for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The Hebrew letters emblazoned in gold surrounding this crucified king read: Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of Armies.

This Jesus, true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, is also true man, born of the Virgin Mary. This is Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish carpenter's son; this is Jesus, the Anointed One of God, Yahweh in the flesh.

Jesus was a human being, like us in every way, except for the fact that he had no sin; instead, he took on the sin of humanity onto himself, and did what only the God/Man could do. The one who bore the Spirit of God, lifted up and bore the sins of the whole world all the way to the cross.

You don't carry, you don't bear the burden of your sin any longer; that is not in your job description. You do not carry your sin; you do not carry your shame; you are not the one who bears the weight and the burden of your sin. That's the job description of the Lamb of God, who takes up and carries away the sin of the world.

Jesus took your sin to the cross and became the once-for-all, completely unique, never-to-be-repeated sacrifice that removed all sin. The one and only place where Jesus was not like you—sin—is the one place where you are not supposed to ever be like him—the one who bears the weight of sin and pays its price.

And yet... and yet this same Jesus, who lived his human life filled with the Spirit and in dependence on the Father, also told his friends: "Anyone who would come after me, must deny

---

<sup>17</sup> Crucifixion Image: the crucifix on the St. Charles bridge in Prague, Czech Republic. INRI: "Jesus Christ, King of the Jews" Hebrew lettering: "Holy, Holy, Holy YHWH of Hosts" from Isaiah 6.



themselves, pick up their cross daily, and follow me.” Even though you cannot bear your sin, to follow Jesus is to bear your cross.

[Return to the baptism image]

**Conclusion: Jesus is absolutely unique and, in the Spirit, you are absolutely like him.**

So Jesus is absolutely unique. And, in the power of the Spirit, you are absolutely like him.

You are not like Jesus in his *power*; no, you are like Jesus in his *weakness*.

You are not like Jesus in his *omniscience*; you are like Jesus in his *dependence*.

You are not like Jesus in his *eternal divinity*; you are like Jesus in his *intimate relationship with the Father*.

You are not like Jesus in his *unique calling as Messiah, Anointed One, Son of God, Bearer and Giver of the Spirit*; and yet, you are absolutely like him in your *unique calling as a baptized child of God, who bearers that same Spirit into the world*.

You are not like Jesus in his *role as Savior of the World*; but you absolutely are like him, for you are *sent into the world* to carry his message of salvation.

You are not like Jesus in his *ultimate authority, seated at the right hand of the Father*; but you are, you are, you are like Jesus, for you also have *submitted yourself to the authority of his Father and yours*.

Filled with the Spirit of Jesus, you are not like Jesus in his *miraculous Kingdom signs*; no, Jesus himself thinks you will do *even greater things than these*.

And before you get too carried away, it’s good to remember that you are only like Jesus because of what Jesus has done for you. Therefore, as you go out in his image to be kind, to be present, to be brave—as you go out to “be Jesus” to the people in your life, you keep your focus on his activity, not yours. For at the exact same time you are “being Jesus” to others, Jesus is there, being himself to you.

As Carl put it: “The actual presence of Jesus is in us, which means that we can be the actual presence of Jesus to others.”<sup>18</sup> Filled with the Spirit, “we will follow [Jesus] right into the humility of dependence.”<sup>19</sup> Amen.

---

<sup>18</sup> 42 Seconds, 112.

<sup>19</sup> 42 Seconds, 137.

**Our goal is simply for  
Jesus to be a natural  
part of our lives  
and everyday interactions  
with people.**

**42**  
SECONDS

### **Introduction to *42 Seconds* Bible Study Notes**

Often, but not always, our Sunday morning bible class shares the same theme as the Sunday sermon. I like to teach and preach on the same content for several reasons. First, it helps the hearers encounter the primary message of the day in multiple formats. Second, it allows people to process out loud what they have heard. Finally, it also gives me a way to use the stuff I had to cut from my sermon or only mention in passing. The first two are about pedagogy; the third simply helps me deal with the heartache of editing down my sermon...

Our *42 Seconds* Series followed that same pattern. I preached four sermons based on the four sections of the book by Carl Medearis. Then, in bible class, I expanded the content of the sermon and broadened the scope of the discussion. The handouts I used in class are included in this resource. They tend to reference other books or resources on the topic; I like to add a variety of voices to the discussion. If you engage the content cited each week ahead of time, you will be well prepared to teach the class and lead the discussion. You can download the master copy of the handouts I used at [justinrossow.com](http://justinrossow.com) and adapt them for your own congregational use.

There are 5 handouts for a 4-week series. Math has never been my best subject. In this case, the first class is intended as an introduction. We handed out the *42 Seconds* book in worship for a few weeks, then pointed people to an intro bible class where we got to know each other and laid a foundation, then we walked week by week with the sermon series.

If you are thinking about using this material in your ministry setting, here are a few other things you might want to know about this Bible class.

### **A. It's Pretty Lutheran**

If you're in a Lutheran context, you're going to recognize a bunch of the names on the book list. People like John Kleinig, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther are pretty darn Lutheran! There's even a few places where some technical Lutheran jargon creeps in to the teaching (on purpose) like when I am talking about Jesus as an example and relate that to the Third Use of the Law.

On the other hand, people like Mike Breen, Brené Brown, and Carl Medearis are pretty much NOT Lutheran. So depending on your context, this stuff might be way too Lutheran for you, or not nearly Lutheran enough.

Know this: I am trying to get people within my tribe to hear something really important from a guy who is not in my tribe. That can be a tricky dance. Fundamentally, I believe what Carl is writing in *42 Seconds* aligns well with Lutheran theology, piety, and mission. Since the content of the bible study supports and extends the teaching of the book, I actually hope you like both, no matter what tribe you are from!

### **B. It's Calibrated to St. Luke—Ann Arbor**

At my local congregation, we have chosen four values that help us express the kind of church we are trying to be. At St. Luke we value *Openness* to people and expression, *Faithfulness* to complex truth, *Connection* through authentic relationships, and *Dependence* on Jesus. Those values find an echo in the four sections of the book: Be Kind (Openness), Be Present (Connection), Be Brave (Faithfulness), and Be Jesus (Dependence). In fact, that's a main reason I wanted to preach and teach this series in the first place!

So you'll notice St. Luke language cropping up occasionally. Feel free to cut it, adopt it, or modify it for your context.

We've also identified three growth environments for followers of Jesus at St. Luke: *My Church Home*, *My Discipling Relationships*, and *My Everyday Communities*. Again, take it or leave it. Just recognize that in some ways all theology gets done at the local level. If you wouldn't say it like we do, how *would* you say it? Can you say it consistently? Can others say it that way, too?

This study is calibrated to fit the way we talk at St. Luke. I don't think the language is so unique or pervasive that you can't use this content for your context. But if the language does sound off here or there, take the opportunity to wonder how you say things around your place, and what your local way of talking means for your values and mission.

### **C. Presentation and Conversation are Equally Mixed**

I actually appreciate a lecture format bible class once in a while. And I kind of love a rambling, verse-by-verse, dig-deep-and-ask-lots-of-questions study. This isn't either of those.

On any given Sunday, we'll have between 80 and 120 adults seated at tables of 6-8. I encourage them to sit at the same table for the whole five weeks, and someone at every table always volunteers to bring breakfast goodies to share. (And a few tables always forget, and several tables always have way too much, and it somehow gets sorted in the end.)

The point of this organization is to *create space for conversation*. We learn differently if we engage verbally. So you will find an opening discussion time in each of the weekly studies. After people have had a chance to connect, I then present new content for a chunk of 15-20 minutes. Then I ask them to discuss something a little deeper at their tables, and I actually give them time to process together. That's one reason to limit the table size to no more than 9: get too big and not everyone can share in the time allotted. After that discussion, I present again, and then usually leave them with more time to talk at the end.

I often field questions, but not too many, because the focus is on the relational learning at the tables. Mostly, the rhythm is: discuss, present, discuss, present, discuss. And if that feels weighted on the discuss side of the scale, I know I have them as a captive audience for the sermon in worship!

### **D. The Bible Class Doesn't Stand Alone**

This set of 5 hour-long bible studies is designed to go along with a 4-part sermon series. It works best if people are actually reading along in the *42 Seconds* book, so each handout ends with directions on what to be reading this week.

As people entered Sunday service, we also provided weekly Taking Worship Home resources that our people use in small groups or in their families. You can find all of these resources on the [justinrossow.com](http://justinrossow.com) 42 Seconds Resource Page.

Not everyone will resonate with all of these options. But the more possibilities they have to engage this content, the more opportunity they will have to receive what Jesus wants to give them, and to be shaped the way he intends. Good luck, and let me know how it goes!

## 42 Seconds Bible Class, Introduction

### Opening Discussion

What's the last book you read?  
Was it business or pleasure?

Besides *42 Seconds*, what other book would you like to read next? Why?

The introduction to *42 Seconds* states, "*Our goal is simply for Jesus to be a natural part of our lives and everyday interactions with people.*"

What do you think about that goal?  
What emotional responses might people have to a goal like that?

**Our goal is simply for  
Jesus to be a natural  
part of our lives  
and everyday interactions  
with people.**

**42**  
SECONDS

### The Foot Washing Example (John 13:12-17 NIV)

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>**I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.** <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

### The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8 NIV)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup>"I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.** <sup>6</sup>If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

### Example, or Not?

On the one hand, Jesus explicitly says that the foot washing is an example. On the other hand, a vine is not exactly an example to a branch.

Talk about how a copy or imitation is related to the original example. Then talk about how a branch is related to a vine. When do these dynamics apply or not apply to following Jesus?

### 3 “Uses of the Law”

The first way God uses the Law is as a curb: natural law in human hearts keeps the world from being even worse off than it is. When talking about Jesus as our example, it’s helpful to contrast the second and third use of the Law.

#### *2<sup>nd</sup> Use of the Law*

Condemns sin and makes us aware of our need for a savior from sin.

Law and Gospel both happen outside of us and for us, for our benefit.

Jesus is NOT our example but our substitute.

Complete dependence on Jesus, who saves and forgives.

#### *3<sup>rd</sup> Use of the Law*

Describes what the Christian life looks like as we begin to live out our faith.

Inside of us, through us, and with us, for the benefit of others.

Jesus is NOT our substitute.  
Jesus is SOMETIMES our example.

Complete dependence on Jesus, who calls, shapes, sends, and empowers.

### So ... Example, or Not?!

Go back to the foot washing and the vine and branches. Are these talking primarily about the 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the Law? Is Jesus an example for us in either?

Hebrews 10:10 says: “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Jesus said, “Everyone who wants to come after me must take up their cross and follow me.” So, is the cross an example, or not? Discuss.

### By the Book

By next Sunday, make sure you **read the Introduction** in the *42 Seconds* book. The author, Carl Medearis, suggests we read and try to live out this book in community. Who are you going to walk with over the next four weeks? Write their name below, and pray for them this week.

If you don’t have a name, show up for bible class next week and join the conversation. Start praying for someone Jesus would put in your life over the next month.

I’m praying for:

## **42 Seconds Bible Class, Week 1: Be Kind**

### **Opening Discussion**

How have you experienced  
*Openness to People and Expression*?

1. In your church home?
2. In your everyday communities?



### **Self-Justification**

The Arbinger Institute's *Leadership and Self-Deception* tells the story of a husband who naturally and unwittingly justifies his action (not getting up with a crying baby) by blaming his wife (66-73). That situation leads to a wonderful summary of the problem we all face: when I sin, "my thoughts and feelings will begin to tell me that I'm justified in whatever I'm doing or failing to do" (73).

Either read or summarize the basics of that situation. Does it seem realistic to you? What do you recognize in yourself from that story?

### **On Living as "True Sinners"**

As long as we are circles turned in on ourselves, we will never truly confess our sinfulness, because we can't. We will always have ready-made excuses for every sin, large or small.

In fact, our thoughts and emotions will begin to justify and rationalize our sin, leading to more sin and more self-justification.

Confession is the only way to break this cycle. Only when you give up on justifying yourself—only when you admit your sin is real sin—can you even begin to be interested in real forgiveness.

God cannot help those who are hell-bent on helping themselves. The self-justified have no need for Jesus or his cross. Only a true sinner can receive true pardon.

### **Always Give an Answer to Everything? (1 Peter 3:15, NIV)**

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

What does this mean?

What does this NOT mean?

### **Barter Up (1 Corinthians 9:19-23 ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might **win** more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to **win** Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might **win** those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might **win** those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might **win** the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, **that I may share with them** in its blessings.

*The Greek word behind our English word “win” does not come from competition, Olympics, or warfare. It is a barter word, a marketplace word. It means giving up something of value to gain possession of something of even greater value (to you).*

1. Describe the difference between **winning something in a competition** and **bartering up to get something of more value**.
2. What did Paul have to give up? What did he get by bartering up?
3. What will you have to give up? What do you expect to receive by bartering up?

### **What I Won't Give Up (Galatians 1:6-9 ESV)**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

*Paul will not let go of the truth of the Gospel, but he will give up his own privilege and rights as far as he can so he can barter up for real people and their eternity. He does this, not for the sake of the doctrine that is the Gospel, but for the people who will share in the blessings of the Gospel with him.*

### **By the Book**

By next Sunday, make sure you **read Section 1: Be Kind** in the *42 Seconds* book (pages 1-30). Feel free to read ahead; the sections complement each other well.

The Big Idea for this section of the book is summarized on page 2: “It’s basically impossible to introduce our neighbors and coworkers to Jesus if we’re not kind to them.”

Sounds obvious, right? But living it out can be a challenge. Keep a running list this week of opportunities you had to be kind. Whether you took the opportunities or not, the first step is noticing them.



## 42 Seconds Bible Class, Week 2: Be Present

### Opening Discussion

How have you experienced

*Connection through Authentic Relationship?*

1. In your church home?
2. In your everyday communities?

Real conversations involve  
**really listening**  
to the person and  
to the Holy Spirit.

42  
SECONDS

### Brené Brown, PhD

Brené Brown, a PhD researcher and storyteller who discovered her own need for vulnerability, has one of the top 5 most viewed TED Talks of all time:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzIF7o> Published 3 Jan 2011.

Watch her TED talk and discuss one or more of the following quotes. Do they resonate with you? How would they affect your everyday life? How do they point you to Jesus?

1. "The original definition [of courage] was to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart. And so these folks had, very simply, the courage to be imperfect... they had connection, and — this was the hard part — as a result of authenticity, they were willing to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they were."
2. Whole-hearted people "didn't talk about vulnerability being comfortable, nor did they really talk about it being excruciating — as I had heard it earlier in the shame interviewing. They just talked about it being necessary. They talked about the willingness to say, 'I love you' first, the willingness to do something where there are no guarantees, the willingness to breathe through waiting for the doctor to call after your mammogram. They're willing to invest in a relationship that may or may not work out. They thought this was fundamental."
3. "Let me tell you what we think about children. They're hardwired for struggle when they get here. And when you hold those perfect little babies in your hand, our job is not to say, 'Look at her, she's perfect. My job is just to keep her perfect — make sure she makes the tennis team by fifth grade and Yale by seventh grade.' That's not our job. Our job is to look and say, 'You know what? You're imperfect, and you're wired for struggle, but you are worthy of love and belonging.' That's our job."

### On Being Truly Present

"We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God"

(*Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 99).

## **Be Present**

*Give the appearance of listening.*

Eye contact, receptive body language

*Use your eyes.*

“Hear” the nonverbals.

60% nonverbal, 33% tone of voice

*Learn to concentrate.*

We think 4+ times faster than we speak

*Avoid interrupting.*

Clarify, but don’t change focus

*Clarify messages.*

“I heard you say . . .”

“It sounds like you’re angry about that.”

*Develop the gift of brevity in speech.*

Care don’t Cure

*One Anothering*, vol. 1, (41-42)

by Richard C. Meyer

## **Care don’t Cure**

### **Cure Statements**

“Don’t worry. It will work out.”

“Have you tried . . .”

“I struggled with that once too.

It will pass.”

“Why don’t you . . .”

“My Aunt Paula faced a similar situation, and here is what she did.”

### **Care Statements**

“How can I support you in this?”

“That sounds painful.”

(or hard or frustrating)

“I wish I could do something. I feel so helpless.”

“Is it OK to call you in a couple of days and see how you are doing with this?”

*One Anothering*, vol. 1, (45)

by Richard Meyer

## **By the Book**

This week, read Section 2: Be Present in *the 42 Seconds* book (pages 33-69). Try to get about halfway through Section 3: Be Brave for Sunday.

Section 2 is about being willing to listen: “It means laying down any agenda or strategy and letting the interaction happen on its own terms. Real conversations involve really listening to the person and to the Holy Spirit” (63).

Section 3 is about being willing to speak, but to speak in a way that flows from being truly present, “to speak out of a heart that genuinely cares. And then to trust God to take care of the rest” (103).

This week, be on the lookout for how the way you listen affects the ways you speak. What did you notice? What would you celebrate? What would you change?

## 42 Seconds Bible Class, Week 3: Be Brave

### Opening Discussion

How have you experienced  
*Faithfulness to Complex Truth?*

1. In your church home?
2. In your everyday communities?

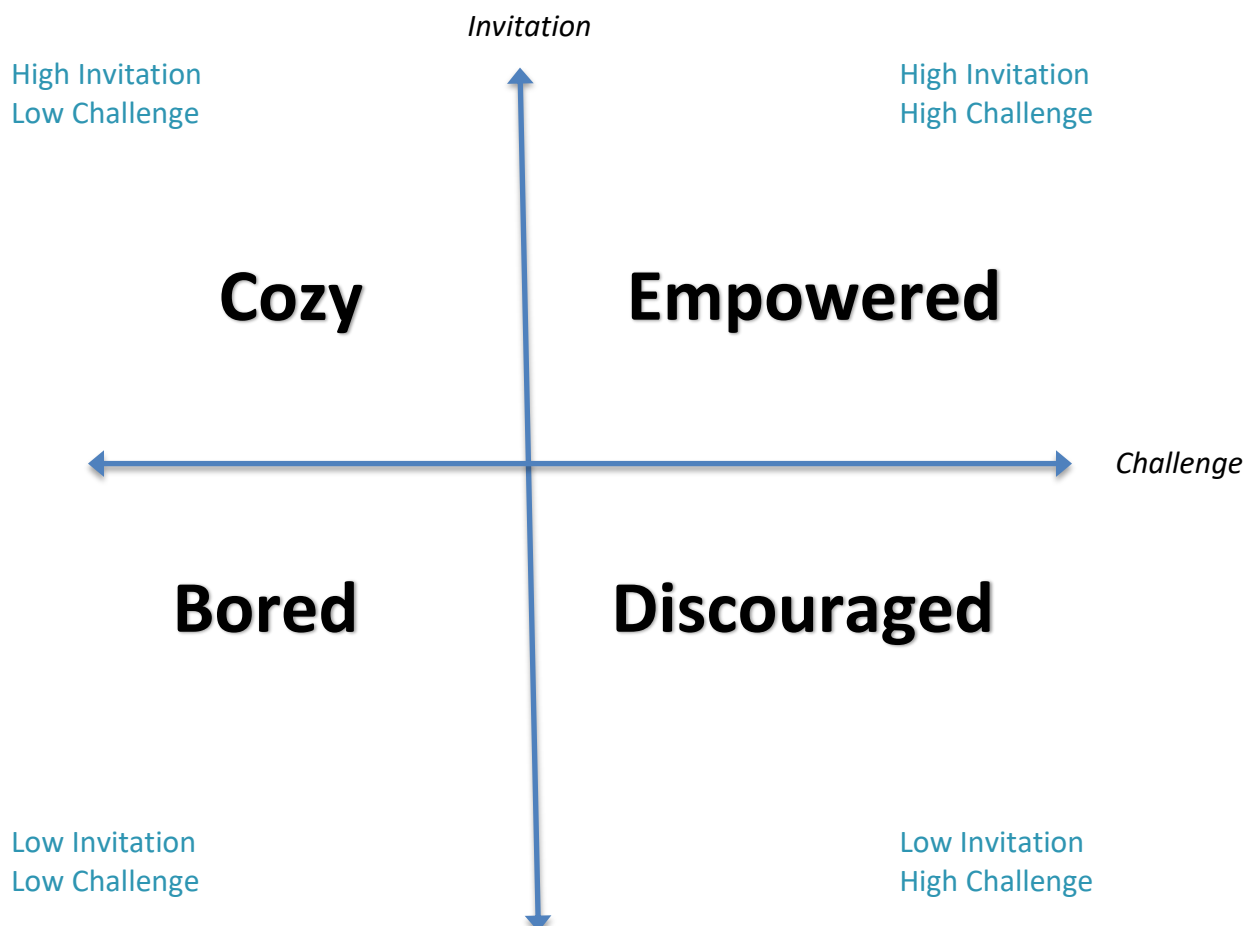
Speak out of a heart  
that genuinely cares.  
**Trust God**  
to take care of the rest.

42  
SECONDS

### The Invitation/Challenge Matrix (from Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*)

The Great Commission has High Challenge (disciple the nations) and High Invitation (I am with you always). Where do you find yourself on this matrix when it comes to interacting with people who don't know Jesus?

Flip your perspective. Where on this matrix do you think people who don't know Jesus are when they interact with you? How might you bring both Invitation and Challenge to that conversation?



## On Being Brave

"Bravery isn't bravery if your ego and need to be right get in the way. True bravery is bold love. True bravery is being like Jesus." *42 Seconds* by Carl Medearis (74).

### Responding to Distrust

#### 1. *Pray, don't Defend.*

Pray for your own heart but also hold them in prayer before God.

#### 2. *Learn, don't Bruise.*

Rather than taking offense, be genuinely interested in their story.

#### 3. *Bond, don't Avoid.*

Actually go out of your way to meet them on their turf.

#### 4. *Affirm, don't Judge.*

Look for real good and affirm it. Adopt their values as far as possible.

#### 5. *Welcome, don't Argue.*

You don't have to convince them. But do invite them into your space.

*I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptic Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*, by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp (36-46).

### Is this my "barley field"?

1. *Is this a problem (and how do I know if this is a problem)?*

2. *Is this the time and place?*

3. *What are the chances of at least a small measure of success initially?*

4. *Am I willing to invest time and energy, and endure some risk, in order to make this change?*

5. *Will I stay relatively calm while I try some new behaviors, not letting fear or anxieties overwhelm me?*

*Speaking the Truth in Love*, by Ruth Koch and Kenneth Haugk (94-97).

## By the Book

This week, finish Section 3: Be Brave and read Section 4: Be Jesus in the *42 Seconds* book (pages 111-151).

Dependence on Jesus is the linchpin of discipleship. In what ways do these chapters invite you to be more and more dependent on Jesus?

Underline some of your favorite quotes to share with your group this week.

## 42 Seconds Bible Class, Week 4: Be Jesus

### Opening Discussion

How have you experienced  
*Dependence on Jesus?*

1. In your church home?
2. In your everyday communities?

### The Holy Spirit and the Word

"Luther presupposes that God the Father sends his life-giving, enlightening Holy Spirit through his word. And so the student of theology ... *prays that the Holy Spirit will use the Scriptures to interpret him and his experience* so that he sees himself and others as God does. In this way he trusts in God's word as a means of grace, the channel of the Holy Spirit" (Kleinig, 7).

### Oratio: Prayer

The reading and praying of God's Word.

### Meditatio: Meditation

Physical, mental, emotional engagement, as if God were speaking this word to me.

### Tentatio: Struggle

Living out of God's Word in real life, which invites the attack of the devil, which drives me back to God's Word.

### The Vita Passiva: The Receptive Life

"The Spirit-filled word attunes us to God the Father by conforming us to his dear Son. We do not internalize [God's Word] in us and assimilate it to our way of being; no, [God's Word] assimilates us and makes us godly. We do not use [God's Word] to make something of ourselves; [God's Word] makes us" (Kleinig, 7).

[http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/1813/2730/7611/Oratio\\_Meditatio\\_Tentatio.pdf](http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/1813/2730/7611/Oratio_Meditatio_Tentatio.pdf)

We follow Jesus  
right into the humility  
of dependence

42  
SECONDS

### Bonhoeffer on Meditation

10-15 verses every day for a week.

### No One Journeys Alone

Begin with a prayer for the Holy Spirit and for others who are meditating.

### The Word of a Person Dear to Me

"Accept the Word and ponder it in your heart, ... until it is entirely within you and has taken possession of you."

### Don't Be an Over-Achiever

"It is not necessary every day to go through the entire text we have chosen... Often we will hold on to one word of it for the entire day."

### Don't Stress

"Passages that we do not understand we can simply pass over."

### Use Distractions as Prayer Requests

"Let the Word of Scripture tell you what you ought to pray for them."

### Don't Forget to Say Thank You

"At the close of the meditation ... say a prayer of thanksgiving from a heart that is full."

*Meditating on the Word,*  
by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, (24-25).

**Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, Concordia Publishing House.**

Take 20 minutes to meditate on John 14:8-10 and jot some notes for each section:

First, I read and consider what God is teaching me [about what He is like and how He acts].

Second, I turn to thanksgiving on account of what God has done.

Third, I confess my sin based upon the text.

Fourth, I use the text to say a prayer for strong faith [discipleship growth].

## Bibliography

Whether you use the sermon notes or bible class handouts provided or not, you will find a helpful addition to your library in the bibliography, below. After the first two resources on sermon structures, the sources are listed in order of appearance in the Bible Study Notes.

Schmitt, David. "Shaping the Sermon: Preaching as Pilgrimage." *CSL Scholar*. 21 Sept. 2011  
<<https://scholar.csl.edu/theo/2011/schedule/12/>>

—. "Sermon Structures." *Concordia Theology*. 27 July 2011.  
<<https://scholar.csl.edu/theo/2011/schedule/12/>>

Medearis, Carl. *42 Seconds: The Jesus Model for Everyday Interactions*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2018.

*Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000.

Brown, Brené. "The Power of Vulnerability." *TED*. June 2010.  
<[https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)>

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. London: SCM Press, 1954.

Meyer, Richard. *One Anothering, Vol. 1: Biblical Building Blocks for Small Groups*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2004.

Breen, Mike. *Building a Discipling Culture*. Greenville, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2011.

Everts, Don, and Doug Schaupp. *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.

Koch, Ruth, and Kenneth Haugk. *Speaking the Truth in Love: How to Be an Assertive Christian*. St. Louis, MO: Stephen Ministries, 1992.

Kleinig, John. "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66/3 (2002): 255-67.  
<[http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/1813/2730/7611/Oratio\\_Meditatio\\_Tentatio.pdf](http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/1813/2730/7611/Oratio_Meditatio_Tentatio.pdf)>

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Meditating on the Word*. Translated and edited by David Mcl. Gracie. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Luther, Martin. *A Simple Way to Pray: for Peter, the Master Barber*. Translated by Matthew C. Harrison. St. Louis, MO: CPH, 2012.

**Our goal is simply for  
Jesus to be a natural  
part of our lives  
and everyday interactions  
with people.**

**42**  
SECONDS

Jesus, I want you to be a natural part of my life. I want you to be a natural part of my everyday interactions with other people. And yet, so often, I'm not even sure what that looks like.

Since you promised to send your Spirit, please breathe on me again. Give me your heart. Give me your thoughts. Give me your eyes.

I know I'm not always going to get it right, but don't give up on me. You have made me a branch and promised I will bear fruit.

So Jesus, be my vine: nourish me, supply me, bind me to yourself, so I can live with you.

Amen.