

Core Values
Outreach: Going Beyond Our Hindrances
Part 4

Intro: Next Saturday is the Goat Mountain Gallop. It is a local race that is one of the oldest half-marathon races in Oregon. (13.1 miles). From what I hear it is grueling – explain. There are quite a few Foothills people running. If you talk to any of them, they will tell you they dress in a manner that does not impede or hinder them in any way. They don't wear anything that slows them down. They don't carry extra weight. Why? Because the race is hard.

- Following Jesus is like a race as well. This is why God's word tells us as followers to throw off the things that hinder us.

Heb. 12:1-2 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith..." (NLT)

What hindrances do we need to go beyond in order to be used by God to impact the lives of others? What weights do we need to strip off so God can use us in outreach? Last week we talked about outreach. Outreach is God's agenda that we need to be on as His followers. BUT often there are hindrances that cause us to withdraw from this race.

- I want to share with you 5 hindrances that will keep us from outreach that Jesus is calling us to go beyond.

1. The hindrance of guilt

- The guilt that keeps us from outreach

Some people do not participate in outreach because they think they are not worthy to do so. "My life is a mess / I'm embarrassed about my past / Who am I to tell others about Jesus / How can God use someone like me." All statements that reflect guilt.

- Guilt has a way of silencing our witness. I have personally blown opportunities that have come my way because at the moment, I was not feeling very victorious in my spiritual life. Because of guilt, I kept my mouth shut.
- God can use you if you are victorious or not. Perfection is not the thing that makes you usable to God. God is not looking for perfect people. God doesn't even call perfect people. WHY? Because there are none! God only uses broken people.
- The Lord illustrated this to me years ago. Share about mission trip to Canada and God using teens to communicate the Gospel.
- Don't let guilt silence your witness.

- The guilt that makes us do outreach

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I better do this so God will bless me. I better reach out to others so God will be happy with me. I better get involved witnessing to others so I can prove to God I am a good follower / If I don't reach out I am a bad Christian /

- I have done so many good things out of guilt. (share examples) Years ago I thought in order to be a good Pastor I had to go door to door (share)
- When we do the right things out of guilt, there is no power in them. WHY? Because these right things are done in the flesh. They are motivated by a fleshly source even though it is a good thing. No blessing in it.
- Secondly, it will create resentment over time. Motivation that comes from guilt makes you a worse person not a better person. It makes you resent the activity and the person you are trying to please.
- I have done a lot of outreach with guilt. (Share being trained in Evangelism in HS)

Rom. 8:1-2 "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you..." (NLT)

- Our actions should come from this motivation not guilt.

2. The hindrance of fear

• Fear of what people think

- There will be no possible way for us to be effective at reaching out to others until we move past our fear of people. We fear what people may think of us / say about us / gossip about us / post on social media about us / we fear looking stupid / we fear not knowing what to say.

- Our fears can silence our witness if we let it. Fear is a powerful thing.

Prov. 29:25 "Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety." (NLT)

- The reason fearing people is a dangerous trap is because it will keep you from following Jesus. Fear becomes the greatest influencer of your life and decisions rather than Jesus. Fear can cancel out your trust in Jesus.

- Some of you are controlled by fear. You refuse to reach out to others because the fear of others is cancelling out your trust in the Lord. "Are you crazy? I'm not going to talk to someone about what Jesus has done in my life!"

- Can I just say that I understand this issue. I know you probably have a hard time believing this. BUT, when you start a church in the town you grew up in, you'd better overcome your fear of people or you will never follow Jesus.

- Before starting Foothills, I argued with God for months about this very issue. (explain) "God, are you crazy? Do you know what people are going to say about me?"

- What I have discovered is that the safest place to be is trusting the Lord. You will never experience this until you trust Him. As you trust Him more, the less fear you will have. Fear is overcome through trust not avoidance.

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- You must step across the threshold of your fear. Jesus is waiting for you there. Pretty soon you will expect Him to be there every time you trust.

3. The hindrance of religion

How is religion a hindrance to reaching out to others?

- Religion offers people an imitation

- Religion misses the very heart of Jesus for people. Religion is all about control – Jesus is all about freedom. Religion keeps people down – Jesus elevates His followers. Religion has no real power for everyday life – Jesus offers supernatural power in real life. Religion makes people feel guilty – Jesus removes guilt. Religion is man’s attempt to deal with sin – Jesus is God’s answer to sin.

II Tim. 3:5 “They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly...” (NLT) Paul is warning people about an imitation.

- What people are rejecting today in our culture is religion. Most people acknowledge they have a spiritual element to their humanity. People are not rejecting spiritual conversations, yet they will resist religious conversations.
- Let’s be aware of how we are communicating to those around us. Are we simply talking about church or are we talking about the difference our relationship with Jesus is making in our lives? (Remember what a witness is?)
- When we simply talk about “church” the world hears religion. We must learn to engage the world in conversations that are more than church attendance / going to groups and classes / and serving somewhere. We must stop representing Jesus in a religious manner to an unchurched audience.
- Religion is a hindrance to outreach. Those of us who have been raised in a church environment really need to think about what we are truly representing. Are we representing religion or Jesus?
- We need to grow in our ability to have spiritual conversations. When you are talking about how your relationship with Jesus has made a difference in your life in some specific manner, this is a spiritual conversation.
- Even when you invite someone to Foothills, why tell people about the impact that Jesus has had on your life in this church environment. Let’s try to move beyond religious conversations.

4. The hindrance of identity

- Not embracing who you really are

Knowing who you really are is an important part of reaching out to our world effectively. WHY? Because you must be able to answer questions that you will ask yourself such as; “Who am I to do this? Why am I doing this? Why would God want me to do this? “I’m not qualified to do this.”

What you believe about yourself greatly influences behavior. If you do not believe the right truths you cannot live in the right manner.

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- One of the greatest hindrances to the followers of Jesus is they do not believe who they really are. This issue is so important we are going to have a message series about this after Easter. Let me briefly explain

I Peter 2:9 “But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.” (NLT)

- Notice 4 identity statements. You are a chosen people / You are royal priests / You are a Holy nation / You are God’s very own possession
- Notice what it says next: “As a result”...you can show others the goodness of God.” As a result of your new identity you can now embrace this new behavior.
- Reject the new identity and you will resist the new behavior. One of the reasons so many followers of Jesus resist outreach is they have yet to fully embrace who they really are.
- Most believers tend to allow their behavior and performance to define who they are instead of what God says about them.
- The bible is filled with identity statements. When we trusted Jesus we not only received eternal life, our entire identities were changed. Some of you are still trapped in your old identity. (This is why old behavior remains)
- There are so many biblical statements that reflect identity. We are Ambassadors / Witnesses / Adopted in the family / We are heirs with Jesus / We are citizens of heaven / we are new creations / You are His Masterpiece /
- Identity changes behavior – When you got married, you began acting like a spouse / when you had your first child, you began acting like a parent. When you got a job you began acting like an employee. Identity = behavior
- When we gave our lives to Jesus, our identities were changed. This is why the bible talks so much about who we are.
- This is why the Apostle Paul wrote statements like this: *Eph. 4:1 “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” (NLT)* Identity = purpose and calling.
- Embracing a life of outreach only makes sense in light of our new identity. BUT, if we do not embrace our new identity now it is a hindrance. If we do not accept our new identities in Christ, outreach doesn’t even make sense.
- This is one of the reasons why so many believers in Jesus only think about their relationship with God impacting their own personal lives. If you reject your true identity, you will have a very self-centered; self-focused perspective.
- Our new identities are connected to outreach. I Peter 2:9...As a result!

5. The hindrance of authority

- Not living in Jesus’ authority

What do I mean by this? Let me give you an illustration. (Share story about being in Jr. High and getting out of class with a Hall Pass and seeing the principal.)

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- In the same way, we have authority to make a difference in this world in the name of Jesus. We conduct ourselves in this world in the authority of Jesus. It is not about how much power we possess. It is about walking in the authority and power that Jesus possess.

Notice how Jesus phrases the mission to His disciples.

Matt. 28:18-19 “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...” (NLT)

- Notice that before the command to make disciples there was a statement about Jesus having ALL authority. Why is this so important? “Hall pass!” You and I have Jesus’ authority to represent Him in this world. We are authorized – we are called – we are empowered – we walk around this broken evil world with the most powerful hall pass in the universe.
- Satan wants to intimidate you / threaten you / make you believe you have no authority and no power to make a difference in this world. He wants you to keep your mouth shut. He wants to keep your witness contained inside church buildings so the world cannot see it.
- We must take our hall pass out into this world with confidence that we are living in the authority of Jesus.
- We have been authorized by Jesus to make a difference in our city. We have His authority to meet pressing needs. We have His authority to pray down the spiritual strongholds that keep blessing from our town. We walk in His authority as we begin another building project.
- Authority gives us confidence to follow Jesus into anything. When we hear the voices of intimidation, we remind the enemy of the Hall pass we possess and if he doesn’t like it He can take it up with the ONE who gave it to us. Authority matters!

We are at the threshold of a new season at Foothills. The purchase of this property and the beginning of a multi-phased project. The reason for this? It is so we can reach 1000s of unchurched people in our geographic area. This mission will take all of us. But we must move beyond our hindrances that are keeping us from its fulfillment.

What hindrance is keeping you from being used by God to reach out to others?