

GATEKEEPING THE GOSPEL

INTRO//

What's up Faith Students?? Welcome to the best night of the week!

CONNECTION//

-How many of ya'll know somebody that gatekeeps? For those that don't know what gatekeeping is, it basically means to hold back info or not let somebody in on something, so it's exclusive.

For example it's like if I ask ___ where they got their shirt and they're like, "well you know I mean I got it at a store a couple years ago so you can't really get it anymore, or it was just 1:1, or some fake excuse like that.

And at it's core, somebody that gatekeeps is really trying to make themselves feel superior, better, more exclusive, because they're in on a trend or fashion or something that now they're gonna hold back from other people getting in on themselves.

"It's like Im gonna keep this to myself because you're not good enough for it"

TRANSITION//

And at some point I believe we've all had that mindset when it comes to the gospel and sharing Jesus with others.

Sometimes we hide Jesus, we hide the gospel, we hide our faith (sometimes for fear and other reasons) but oftentimes it can come from a place of pride and a looking down on others.

We can develop a heart and mindset that we're better than others, this gospel is for exclusive, good, cleaned up people, and anyone that doesn't know Jesus, doesn't follow him, struggles with certain things, looks a certain way, doesn't deserve this gospel that we know and this relationship with God we walk in.

As the church we can develop an attitude of us VS them, in VS out, and we almost make assumptions of who can be saved, and who can't. Who can know God, who can follow Jesus, and who can't. This person is too wild, that sin is too big, that person is too bad for Jesus to save them.

This isn't a new thing, even the early church and early followers of Jesus had this same belief.

See as we're going through the book of Acts and looking at the early church, up to this point the church is only Jewish people. Now makes sense as Jesus was Jewish, but also makes it even more interesting Jesus' greatest opposition was the Jewish religious leaders.

But because of this, the gentiles, which are anyone non-Jewish, were left out! And not just left out, there was some real hatred towards them division with them, from Christians!

See there were all these ceremonial laws, traditions, and things that God gave Israel to set them apart, sacrifices they would make, to make them right with God.

But now, since Jesus was the ultimate atonement, the ultimate sacrifice, because of His death on the cross we no longer have to keep all those traditions, because Christ's blood was enough!

It's Jesus' sacrifice and really the Holy Spirit that fills us that now sets apart Christ-followers, not traditions and laws.

And we see God reveal this to Peter and the early church in Acts 10, and we'll start in verse 19, but while you're turning there, let me catch us up.

CONTEXT//

Last week we talked about Saul's conversion, who most of us know as Paul now, who wrote most of the New Testament and was a major person in the early church. And last week we even read that God told Ananias, Paul would reach many Gentiles for the gospel. But at this point in the story, that seems crazy. There's still so much division, separation and difference in lifestyle, it seems impossible. But as we talked about last week when Saul converted and began preaching the gospel, God can do things that seem impossible.

Even the things that Jews and Gentiles eat cause so much conflict, and we read this in chapter 10 when Peter gets hungry, sees a vision of all kinds of animals, some that scripture and God told Israel was "unclean" but this voice now tells Peter to eat these animals.

Peter's response is "hold up I thought that stuff was unclean?" And the voice responds in verse 15: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean"

And this vision was repeated several times, and Peter is at a loss for words. That's where we pick up the story in verse 19 which hopefully you've had time to turn there, it says this:

SCRIPTURE//

“Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don’t worry, for I have sent them.” So Peter went down and said, “I’m the man you are looking for. Why have you come?” They said, “We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message.” So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa. They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter pulled him up and said, “Stand up! I’m a human being just like you!” So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.

Tonight I want to talk about reaching people in the world that seem unreachable, sharing the gospel, love and truth of Jesus with people that are so different from us, and ultimately point us to the reality that Jesus is for everybody.

If you’re taking notes the title of the message is” Gatekeeping the Gospel” and before we hop into it, let’s pray:

PRAY

CONNECTION//

-How many of ya’ll are good about doing something when you’re asked, and doing it the first time?

-To be honest a lot of us procrastinate or push off what we’re asked to do

In this story Peter is asked to immediately go downstairs and talk to the men looking for him. And he does it!

What happens next is he meets Cornelius who is the first Gentile believer. He was a Roman Centurion yet knew and feared God and was respected by the Jewish people.

This is the first step and part of the gospel being share to Gentiles and the church expanding, and this moment gives us the first point in the blueprint of reaching people we think are far from God or are different from us, and it’s

1//BE LED BY THE SPIRIT

When we're led by the spirit, the word and the truth of God, we'll naturally be led to love and reach those around us.

Peter was truly led by the spirit. He wasn't just listening, he was led, he did what the Holy Spirit called him to do, and as a result, like we'll see in a bit, the church is forever changed.

When we're asked to do something by a parent or maybe even a teacher or coach, or maybe even by our boss at a job, we may LISTEN, but we aren't led and don't really follow right away.

Similarly, of us listen to the spirit, some of us listen to God's word each and every week, but we aren't LED and we don't actually follow God, we don't actually walk in what the Holy Spirit calls us to.

And sometimes God speaks to us personally, very clearly. Sometimes people literally hear the audible voice of God and get direction on who to talk to about Jesus, what to do with their lives, sometimes we will have moments like Peter when the Holy Spirit is leading us to do something specific.

But what about when he's not. What about when it's not so personal or specific? Does that mean God isn't real, does that mean God isn't speaking, does that mean I shouldn't do anything because God isn't speaking to me?

No! Because the truth is God has already spoken! When you aren't sure what God has or is calling you to in the future, focus on what he's called you to in the present! And we know that by reading the Bible and reading his word!

Sometimes we hear something speaking but we don't know if it's us, God, or something else entirely. How do we know the difference? We read the word of God! We test everything by putting it next to scripture, if it lines up, probably God speaking, if it doesn't, might be yourself or even the enemy speaking lies to you.

That's why reading the Bible is so important! Among many other reasons.

We can get into a place where we desire "fresh revelation" and new things for God to speak to our situation when he's already spoken!

And I read something mad convicting in the devotional we went through together this week, *BIBLE APP PLUG*

And it said this: "

It's so common for followers of Christ to desire to make great strides in the kingdom of God. We want to change the world but don't consider it very important to change our part of the world, let alone ourselves. We get laser-focused on the will of God that is Unknown to us and push the Known will of God aside. The Unknown will of God is much more exciting and grand to us. The Known will of God, which includes numerous dos and don'ts, tends to be boring and monotonous. We want to know what He has for us tomorrow but we disobey Him today."

HEART CHECK// Do I just listen to God or am I really led by him?

Because if we want to reach the world around us with hope, love and truth, we have to be like Peter and be truly LED by the spirit.

And Peter isn't just led by the spirit to these men, these men then connect Peter with Cornelius, who we find out sent these men to find Peter, because he was "LED BY THE SPIRIT" to do so! (V.30-33).

Even more reason to truly asses ourselves, our heart and lives, and am I led by the spirit or just listening? Because life change, world change, is on the other side of being led by the spirit.

TRANSITION//

But when Peter gets to Cornelius' house, and they first interact, I think it shows us our next step/point in sharing the gospel with people that may be different than us:

v.25 "As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!" So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled."

2//BE LED BY SIMILARITIES

CONNECTION//

-How many of you guys have a friendship that just doesn't make sense? Maybe you have a friend that you don't have anything in common with, you're really different people, but somehow, you're really good friends.

-I have a friend Jared that I met in high school. We didn't go to the same school, we didn't have the same interests (I played sports, he was in band), I was more calm and collected, he's really extra and crazy, YET- because we were in the same youth group and because we were both pursuing God, we're great friends that are still close to this day. Even if we don't talk as consistently

anymore, we always can pick right up where we left off and have the deepest + realest conversations.

-It doesn't make sense! But I can't imagine missing out on the friendship, memories and growth that I've had because of Him. And I really easily could've missed out on all of that had I seen him as someone impossible to relate to, and too different for me to be friends with.

TRANSITION//

-It starts with humility, and again not having this "gatekeeping" mindset, this "I'm superior mindset" but really seeing the similarities in each other.

I love how even though Cornelius low key idolizes Peter when he walks in the door, Peter humbly tells him to get up and says "I'm a human being just like you".

What an amazing mindset. At the end of the day Peter wasn't led by the fact he was a foundational part of the early church, he wasn't led by pride and this man basically worshipping him, he wasn't led by the fact that they had very different cultures and backgrounds, he was led by the fact they were both humans, both men, in need of Jesus.

It's amazing to see Peter's quick change from not even wanting to eat unclean food to now relating to and talking with a man that wasn't Jewish, and would've been deemed and thought of as "unclean".

In verse 28-29 Peter said: "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for."

These points tonight really go hand in hand. As we are LED by the spirit, as we follow Jesus, we will be led by similarities. We will be led by humility. We won't look for differences and division, but we will look for open doors and bridges and ways to bring the gospel, life change and transformation, any way we can.

As we're led by the spirit I believe we'll begin to see ourselves in others. They may look different, sin different, live different, but instead of seeing those things, we'll see the similarity that we're all just broken people in need of a savior.

HEART CHECK// HOW CAN I BE MORE HUMBLE AND SEE MYSELF IN OTHERS?

When we're led by the spirit we're led by the similarity of the fact that we ALL need the hope and healing that's found ONLY in the name and the gospel of Jesus.

Ultimately when we're led by the spirit, when we're led by similarities, we're led by salvation.

That's our 3rd and final point here tonight:

3//LED BY SALVATION

After this Peter preaches to Gentiles, share the gospel and what he and other Christians had seen. And this is the response in v.44-46 **““Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.”**

In this moment everything is changing! Gentiles are hearing the gospel, being saved, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. What a turnaround! These people that just verses ago were looked at as unclean and dirty, now are a part of the church!

Later on Peter explains all of this to others in the early church and that was the response??

In chapter 11:18 “When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, “We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.”

They began praising God, because now everyone has the privilege to repent, to turn from sin and their lifestyle, and receive the Holy Spirit and receive eternal life. They praised God and they saw the bigger picture. They weren't focused on the differences and the little details, they were focused on salvation.

At the end of the day it's my heart we have this same response and heart toward people today. There's so many problems divisions and disagreements that I believe could be worked out if we were led by the gospel. If we were led by salvation. If we were led from this place that we all are messed up and in need of a savior, If we were led from a place that we've all fallen short in some way or another, yet God's grace has saved us and the Holy Spirit has redeemed us, we've been born again, and now can walk in the life God created us to live.

Sometimes we “gatekeep the gospel” because we want to clean people up before they come to God, but the true gospel is that we can’t clean ourselves, we need the blood of Jesus to cleanse us, we need the Holy Spirit to make us new!

So lets be led by salvation. Let’s be focused on preaching the gospel to others and teaching truth and ultimately allowing the Holy Spirit do the rest

ALTAR//

1. Salvation- First I need to receive and accept the gospel myself
2. Humility- I need to let go of pride, see myself in others, and share the gospel with others even if they’re different/difficult
3. Obedience- I need to stop just listening to God and start actually being led by Him- following through