

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Reach Out: Use Technology**  
1 John 4:7-12  
May 24, 2015

You know, the great commission of our Lord Jesus is what business the church is in and what business we Christians are in and he says, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

That key word is “go.” In other words, find out where the people are. That’s why St. Paul went to the large cities of the Eastern Mediterranean basin; that’s where the people were. Today, one of the places where people have migrated to is in the world of technology, it’s in cyberspace; it’s in a virtual world where people learn and discuss and talk and make friends that are just as real to them as people who are flesh and blood. And so Christians in the church need to live in that virtual world, as well.

Today, I’d like to challenge you to come with me into the Scripture to have a discussion about the way in which we use the blessings of technology to communicate the saving gospel of Christ. What I would like to talk with you about for the next few minutes is the little Bible study taking the next step in getting you more effective as an outreach agent for God. For when you became a Christian, it was not with the idea that okay, your security is taken care of. Basically, the goal of your life is to kill time and have some fun like earth is a gigantic waiting room before you get into heaven. You are part of God’s action team automatically. When you became baptized, you were drafted into an army. The only question is if you’re going to be any good at sharing the gospel or not for all of you are part of God’s communication team.

In the first Bible study in the series, I talked about what I believe is an absolute essential in all evangelism or outreach or sharing of the word of God and that is you’ve got to love people because this isn’t about manipulation, this isn’t about pushing people around. Christians often – to unbelievers or maybe fallen away believers – we often look like jerks because not all of us really share the gospel well. Or we look like we’re trying to manipulate people or push them around or get something from them. Nothing could be further from the truth. The idea and emotion at the core of all outreach is, “I care too much about you to let you live your life ignorant of the greatest news in the world.” And if you truly and unconditionally love somebody, you will say the words that carry the power to release people from a lifetime of guilt, from a lifetime of confusion and having no purpose, and free them from the dread of dying and the fear of suffering, the fear of Judgment Day, even the fear of God. And people have thousands of behaviors they’ve come up with to help them escape the horrible pressure of the guilt of their own sin, the evil they know is within them, their fear of God. “I do not want to be accountable to somebody; I’m terrified of where that’s going to go and I’m miserable at how fast my life is ticking away and I’m dreading the fact that it’s going to be seem to be over so fast.” So we go faster and faster and trying to pack everything in in what we know is just a little time to run and shout and then you keel over. You can free people from a life with that kind of frustration in it. But it starts with loving them unconditionally and making people feel important. That’s a big deal.

Second, you've got to have your mind arranged and know what you're going to say. So do that prep before the occasion, the opportunity comes, because if that door pops open and you don't really know what to say, you'll just be tongue-tied and you will stall or change the subject or talk about sports or talk about the weather or talk about so and so's baby. You won't get into what really matters. So we did a little Bible study through Ephesians 2:1-10 to talk through those four key words; how to get your mind arranged about four key concepts God would like people to know. Remember those four if you were here on that Sunday? First one is sin, second one is grace, third one is faith, the fourth one is works. Awesome. Got a little quiet towards the end; I think you were having to dig kind of deep into your memory but that's alright. It's early yet and there will be more coffee after church to kind of help your brain along. That's our message. That is what people need to know and it has to be in that order.

I'd like to have you sit down on the ground with a miserable, suffering man with me and let him teach you and encourage you in a third area that I think is helpful in God using you as one of his connector agents of sharing the gospel of Jesus with people and that's Job, who's going to give us some words of inspiration about technology. And as we meet him today, he's sitting on the ground, his body covered with sores that would not heal, and he's scratching them with a piece of pottery trying to get some relief. That's how low he is when we meet him.

You might say, "What's hurting me is I've suffered some terrible losses in my life. My husband died way too young." "I lost my wife." "We had to bury a child." And you'd say, "I can't get that out of mind. I'm just grieving over that." "I had a stillborn child and I am hurting ever since. I cannot move past that." Job would say, "I know how you feel." And he has earned the right to say that because many of his family members were killed by a string of horrible disasters and he went painfully to funerals he did not want to go to. So if that's your life, Job is there with you. He's grieving with you.

If some of you have suffered financial reverses, you've been laid off or fired, your investments turned out to be duds, you followed somebody's advice that was terrible advice and you lost a ton of money, or some financial company you thought you could trust fleeced you and took you for a ride, some investor advisor that you thought you could trust let you down and you suffered some terrible financial reverses. Job would say, "I know what you're saying."

Job lived at a time when he had significant wealth before there were banks, before there was paper money, Job lived even before there was coinage. People measured wealth in arid countries – and Arab countries – they measured wealth by what was on four legs. Their animals were their wealth. And Job's flocks got attacked twice – once by Sabeans and then again by Chaldean raiding bands. And they plundered, they beat up and killed his staff, his shepherd staff who was working for him, and stole all his flocks. So financial disaster, health disasters, and horrible bereavement losses are leaving this man just crushed and yet, he struggled – he believed in the goodness of God and was just trying to make sense of this.

So I'll let you read that stuff another day, at another time, and I would like to pull out the most shining verses put right in the middle by God on purpose. In the middle of all of this suffering, Job bursts out with words of hope that are not just for you – although they are indeed for you – they also are for everybody, the world to know, and some people on earth will listen only to you.

You may be the only person with influence on this individual who grew up without the gospel. And if it's going to get done, it's got to be you to get 'er done because they won't listen to anybody else. To listen to a message about God means you have to let your defenses down, let your guard down. Same as, "I love you" messages can't get through if you're armored up. Only someone who trusts you will let you tell them the reason your life is so hard is because we're all sinners. And we're broken from God; we're disconnected and need to reconnect. But Jesus is our connector. Let me tell you what my best friend did for me and what he did for you, as well. They won't listen to anybody else but you. They won't let anybody but you tell them and that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

Here is Job's message. First, I'm going to kind of do it backwards. I'm going to take Part B first and then Part A. First the message: Job, financial ruin, grieving, and bereaved and feeling horrible, body aching, falling apart says, "I know that my Redeemer lives." A redeemer is somebody who gets me out of a fix that I can't take care of myself. My helper. My debt payer. My liberator. The one who's going to make a payment for me is alive. That implies – the statement "he's alive" – suggests that Job was aware that maybe death of the Redeemer was going to be an issue, too, and imbedded in this statement is the idea that the Redeemer was dead, again seeming to dash all hopes, but the Redeemer's alive. And there's a little clue there because finally, all human suffering is a riddle but it's the riddle of the cross. It's the way of God to get his agenda done through suffering and death because it was only through that work of Jesus that you and I can receive two spectacular benefits: The forgiveness of our sins in God's eyes and unconditional love being announced over us, unworthy though we are. And second, the absolute guarantee that no matter what has happened in your life, when you are in faith, you are immortal and God will reassemble your body and you start over. It's the ultimate mulligan. You get a complete do-over and your immortality is guaranteed. So it takes away that frantic pressure to try to get it all before death shuts her down and ends everything. That's incredible! What a story! And Job busts out with it right now: "My Redeemer lives!"

Second, he's coming back. In the end, the end game is at some point in the future; it sure ain't now as he sits there scratching himself. He says, "It ain't now but I know it's coming." His body is just inflamed and pussy and weeping and ugly – he not only was hurting, he looked horrible! He was ugly looking. The skin looked horrible; like the people thought he had leprosy and would shun him. But he's coming back and "In my flesh, I will see God. Even though my skin is going to be destroyed," I can watch myself falling apart now. It's the ultimate horror of the aging process. You watch your body slowly falling apart. I'm going to see God from the standpoint of my flesh. "In my flesh, I will see God." In Hebrew this literally says, "From my flesh," meaning from the vantage point of this, what's now an old bag of bones, this bag of bones is going to disintegrate when my skin is destroyed. When I go back to being what I was made from – like Adam, 'adam, adamah – in Hebrew means dirt or earth. Adam, the first man, was a dirt man. He said, "I know I'm going back. I'm a dirt man, too, just like daddy Adam. Going back to dirt."

But, "In my flesh," the flesh that was destroyed, "I will see God." And he says it again – in case you missed it – he says it again. "I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another." This isn't somebody else. It's not like my great, great, great, great, great grandchildren who are alive when Jesus comes back will see him. I'm going to see him! "How my heart yearns within

me!” Oh Lord, come for me now! I’m tired of waiting. I hurt. Earth has nothing left for me. My life feels like it’s over. I’m waiting for you; please, come soon. And of course, this is by now, maybe four thousand years ago and Judgment Day still has not yet come and who knows when God is going to arrive. He will send Jesus at just his right time but in the meantime, here is a shout of hope from a man that even financial disaster, miserable health, and terrible bereavement of loved ones, that hope was not snuffed out. This is for your heart, as well, to comfort and encourage you when life has smacked you around. Maybe you’re riding high right now and you think, “Well, I don’t need this, I’m doing great. Just got a raise, feel good, new car. My life basically pretty much rocks right now.” Just keep this in the vault; you will need it if you don’t now.

Some of you are like halfway there like if I ask you how you’re doing you’ll say, “Well, alright,” and you can tell me some good things but you’ve also got one leg in some serious manure. You just don’t want to whine about it but there’s some hurt going on. And some of you are sitting there with Job. You’re reeling right now and your life is a mess. You’re sitting there with Job just saying, “How my heart yearns within me. Do it; quit waiting. Don’t keep me dangling!” And you’re struggling with that problem of human suffering as well, just like Job.

Now for the finale, go up to Part A, 23: What to do with this? Job believed this for his own heart but he wanted to share it and look at how Job imagines his technology of his day, enabling two things to happen: I want to leave my faith behind; I want to leave a deposit that will endure beyond my bag of bones because my skin’s going to be destroyed. Technology helps ideas, including the gospel of Christ’s idea, to endure beyond our own lifetime. You can write things down. It also enables ideas to move between people out of earshot with each other. The only technology that the word of God was able to be communicated to by early on in the Genesis days was word of mouth. But now Job begins to dream of technologies available to him at that time to preserve his ideas and to share and spread his ideas because they become portable. When you use technology, it enables those ideas to move beyond the range of the human voice.

“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll.” Well, joke’s on you, Job! They were! Job was written down. This whole dialogue was written down and his words about a living Redeemer were written down. Apparently they weren’t yet at this moment because he didn’t realize what he was dreaming of was actually going to happen. Hard even to know who wrote the book of Job. God didn’t think you needed to know so save your speculation; put it on your list of things to ask when you get to heaven.

“Write it down on a scroll.” The very making of papyrus or of parchment, the scraping of animal skins to make a smooth writing surface, that’s a technological advance unavailable to earlier generations. You try that sometime; it’s harder than it looks. I’d like to see you with - let’s say a goat skin – that you just killed a goat and you’ve managed to sort of get the skin off the goat. I’d like to see you turn that into a writing surface. That’s a good trick! You’ve got to boil it to get the hair off, you’ve got to scrape it just right, you have to dry it, you have to treat it with some chemical washes so that the disintegration stops. You have to then use abrasives to smooth it out. You have to trim it, you have to stretch it so that it gets done with all its stretching and shrinking and contracting and all that stuff, prune it up and finally you have an elegant writing

surface. And Job was aware of that technology. He said, “Get some ink, write down what I’m going to say.”

“No,” he says, “I’ve got a better idea! I want something that will even be more permanent than papyrus.” Papyrus does pretty well in a dry country, but any humidity and papyrus starts to get mushy and starts to disintegrate. He says, “I need something that’s going to last longer. I know, metal!” And the soft metal, softest metal people knew how to work with back in the day was lead. And what actually – in the years before Christ – there actually was the technology of hammering lead into thin sheets and you’d scratch it, like with a stylus, and it would be able to communicate a message and it would last. In fact, one of the things that kind of pagan cultures did back then was have lead pages with curses on them and it’s like voodoo; it’s a form of voodoo. If you want to curse somebody or put your curse on some individual or some peoples that were messing with you, you would write it on lead, roll it up, drive a pin through it, and then bury it in the ground knowing that the oxidation of that lead would take so long that that message would be around for the gods to consider for a long time.

“No,” he says, “I’ve got a better idea yet! Something that will be very public and will last for millennia. Let’s carve it in rock forever!” “Oh, if only my words were written on a scroll.” No better – “Inscribed with an iron tool on lead.” No, better than that, let’s do what the United States someday is going to do and carve over the lintel. Instead of “equal justice under law,” I wish somebody somewhere could carve like a giant Mount Rushmore, only instead of faces put “My Redeemer lives!” The Redeemer is coming back. Believers will rise. Carve it in stone so that that message will endure beyond me.

So let me encourage you to be like Job and to imagine the technologies available to you. You don’t have to dink around with papyrus or parchment anymore; you’ve got paper. Paper can be an awesome way to give a spiritual message. But you’ve got way more than that. You won’t be doing any stone carving probably and I doubt if you’re going to be scratching messages into lead sheets. But you’ve got a telephone, something Job never did. You have print, printing presses, and the ability that you not only don’t have to come up with evangelism messages on your own, you can use printed materials already there waiting for you and you can simply give them to someone and say, “Read this and let me know what you think of it.” And people in the privacy of their own homes, when they don’t feel like they’re being watched and under pressure can read that message and let it soak into their heart. An awful lot of amazing stuff has been done when people don’t feel like they’re being pushed or shoved or manipulated; when they can process this information at their own speed.

You have the ability to use the Christian materials of the internet not only to view and read for yourself, but then to send on. And one of the promises of the digital age is that you have video and text that you not only can take for yourself, but that you can package and resend and the gospel is exploding all over the globe and you are part of the relational explaining of the gospel and you can use technology that you figured out how to handle. Even if it’s just watching television – say a show like Time of Grace, just to pick an example out of nowhere – you can invite people to watch it with you or you can let them know when it’s on and they can, in their own house, in their comfy chair where they like to watch TV, they can hear the gospel message if they’re not quite ready to step into a congregation yet and be embarrassed and feel nervous and

not know anybody and worry about their clothes and worry about how they act, worry about the whole thing, and you can help them receive the gospel not just by direct one-on-one evangelism, but in addition to that important piece, to use the technologies God has given to you to do what Job said: “Oh, if only my words were recorded.” The gospel has been recorded and it’s all there for you to use because only you have a key to unlock somebody else’s heart. Only you have a relationship of trust where that can be shared.

“How my heart yearns within me,” Job says. Our hearts yearn, too, that everyone will know we have a Redeemer who’s alive! So that all may know that our Redeemer is coming back and so that all may know that the believers will view God with their own eyes – not somebody else. That though their skin has been destroyed, in their flesh they will see and worship God. That we have one whom we worship who’s mightier than the grave, mightier than Satan, mightier than death, mightier than hell itself, and all the demons who live there. That’s our Redeemer and he’s coming for us to take us home. How my heart yearns within me!

Here’s a question from a viewer that kind of caught my attention. The person writes: *“I want to use Facebook to share my faith but I don’t want to seem pushy or look like all I post is religious stuff. Any advice?”*

Great question and especially having to do with using technology to spread the gospel. Social media really are an important communication and relational tool today. Even if you didn’t grow up with it, the fact is that’s where a lot of people live; that’s where they are to be found; that’s where you can catch their attention; that’s where you can build relationships; that’s where you can communicate. So thinking and being intentional about a social media strategy really is a good question, a good concern for Christians and their churches to have.

How do you do that and look natural? I would say the first thing to think about is just be yourself, be who you are, be real, and don’t worry about how you might be perceived. You don’t have to sound like you’re into sales and jamming stuff on people or being judgmental or being pushy. Just tell the truth; tell why Jesus matters to you. Share why you’re happy, share what God’s word tells you about your Savior and that you have seen patterns about what God is doing in your life. Sprinkle that in with other real world things and just look and sound real and just be yourself and then let the Spirit take the power of what you have said and bring it home to people and I think then you just let go of it and let the Spirit take it from there.

Let’s pray today, shall we, that God will bless Time of Grace’s outreach but also bless your personal outreach capability and outcome.

*Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for a powerful message; the message of your love. Your word helps us make sense of our world, who we are, and how we fit. Your world has made us somebody; we belong to you now. We’re your children and you have obligated yourself to us as a Father and as our Creator. And you gave us our Savior Jesus, who enables us to live every day without guilt and without fear. We know we’re loved. We know we’re forgiven.*

*Holy Spirit, you now call us to do outreach and to share good news. You’ve commissioned us as believers to be useful to your kingdom agenda in helping people know about their Savior. Use us*

*personally with our gifts, with our attention, with our words, with our relationships, and through technology to spread good news of Jesus far and wide.*

*Make each of us feel like a part of your team and help us to care as much about outreach as you do – not only believing the message, but sharing it, too. We ask for your blessings upon all of our efforts and bless Time of Grace as well, for we pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.*

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mark Jeske. Every day is a day of God's amazing grace for you.

# *Grace* notes

guides for personal Bible study

## *Reach Out: Use Technology*

**Job 19:23-27:** “Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Make a list of the many and varied ways that the Church has used to spread the gospel over the years.
2. Read Job 19:23,24. Why do you think Job wanted his words to be written down?
3. Job made a simple statement of faith. Can you think of situations when you too could make a simple faith statement as a witness to a friend, coworker, or family member?

