



In his book *The Perfect Storm*, Sebastian Junger tells a devastating story. You probably remember it; they made a movie of the story as well. The Andrea Gail, a 72-foot commercial fishing vessel, headed into the North Atlantic on a fishing trip in October of 1991. The goal like always was to fill the freezers with thousands of pounds of fish. This was the occupation and passion of the six-man crew. They were good at this! They said they were the best. They were veterans.

But this trip was different. A storm, a storm later called the perfect storm, was building. A low-pressure system was moving southeast from Canada due to meet Hurricane Grace which was moving North through the Atlantic. Weather forecasters delivered warnings. Port authorities delivered warnings. Family of the crew listened to these warnings and pleaded with the crew to stay in port but the crew ignored them all.

This seasoned, veteran crew looked at the calm weather in port, reflected on how often the weather reports were wrong and decided they were good enough to beat any storm.

When the storm hit its full power, the waves were over 100 feet tall. The wind was blowing over 75 miles per hour. The Andrea Gail and crew weren't good enough to beat the storm. Their ship was capsized and the entire crew was lost.

It's a heartbreaking story because this tragedy could have been avoided if they'd only listened and not gone fishing. As I read the book, I found myself crying as I felt the pain and loss of the surviving family members. If only they'd listened to the good advice they'd received.

Romans 10 describes a similar situation, in a spiritual sense. The Israelites have received all the good advice and instruction from God and God's prophets, they had Jesus come to them in the flesh to tell them how to live and know God, yet they didn't listen either. They ignored it all. They are headed into a spiritual storm of the destruction of their souls. And Paul is brokenhearted by their refusal to accept Jesus as the Lord.

**Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge (Romans 10:1-2).**

You see it, don't you? They are filled with zeal but it's not based upon accurate knowledge. In verses 3-4 we see part of why they

refused to accept Jesus. They wouldn't submit to the information that Jesus was God.

**Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

Instead of acknowledging the truth of Jesus being God, they continued in their personal zeal to meet the Law. It was always an impossible task, but they wouldn't listen.

**Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: (verses 5-8).**

Paul quotes both Leviticus and Deuteronomy, a couple of Old Testament books written by Moses. Verses 6-8 are confusing to us because most of us aren't Jewish. Any Jew would have understood what Paul meant here. He's simply quoting the Old Testament and applying it to Christ. He's saying that salvation is available, you don't have to run up to Heaven to get it, Christ has already come down. You don't have to raise Christ from the dead, because it's already happened.

He's simply saying that everything you need to be saved is already available through faith in Jesus Christ. Rick Warren describes it this way: "Every other faith is based on the word 'do' — Do this.. this.. this... and you'll get to heaven. Christianity is based on 'done.' It's been done, finished. And you just accept it."

This was news that the Israelites couldn't accept. Look at the end of chapter 10. King David (v. 18), Moses (v. 19) and Isaiah (verses 20-21) were clearly saying before Jesus came to earth, no one can perfectly obey the Laws. You need a Savior. But they wouldn't listen. Like the crew of the Andrea Gail, they were seasoned, spiritual veterans. They looked at the spiritual culture they'd built—their rituals, their traditions and the temple. The Rabbis knew the first five books of the Old Testament scriptures by memory. They were the experts. They refused to submit to an untrained prophet from a small country town (that's Jesus). So

they rejected the message that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Law. They refused to submit.

In stark contrast to the Jews, the Gentiles were listening. They saw Jesus' miracles. They heard Jesus teach with authority. They saw Jesus die on the cross. They saw Jesus come back to life. They were believing in Jesus as "the Lord" with such frequency that they were changing their cities and ultimately changing the world. They are a model showing, Who can be saved today?

**If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (verses 9-13).**

Who can be saved today? Anyone. But salvation is not fuzzy. Salvation is not belief in higher powers, regardless of what name you give them. Salvation is not experienced through yoga chanting. Salvation is experienced through Jesus Christ and Him only. I've used these verses countless times to explain how a person can know salvation through Jesus Christ. Verses 9 and 10 tell us that a person needs to declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.

What does this mean? Does this mean that the phrase, "Jesus is Lord" has some kind of mystical power? No. It means that a person was so fully convinced that Jesus was God in the flesh, who had died on the cross and rose again, that they'd be brave enough to say, "Jesus is Lord."

Let me explain by giving you a little history to understand these verses. During the 1st Century, Christianity was growing and spreading like crazy but that doesn't mean it was popular. Paul himself wrote about being stoned by angry mobs and being threatened. Look, Christianity turns the power structures of the world upside down. And if you're fully invested in the power structures of this world, Christianity is threatening.

As a result, opponents to Christianity worked a legal angle making it illegal to be a Christian. They reasoned that a person couldn't call Jesus "the Lord" and Caesar "Lord" at the same time. They pressed the issue and forced people to choose. So a person accused of being a Christian would be dragged before a judge and the process would go like this:

Judge: "If you're a follower of Jesus, you will be killed. If you're not, you'll be free to go. So what's your declaration? Is Caesar Lord or is Jesus Christ Lord?"

Accused: If they said, "Caesar is Lord" they were immediately released. If they said, "Jesus is Lord", the judge would re-explain the situation and ask them a second time, "What's your declaration?"

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Accused: If they said, "Caesar is Lord" ok, everything is fine; they were immediately released. If they said, "Jesus is Lord" a third time, the judge would instruct the guards to take them away for execution. They were a condemned criminal.

Everyone knew about the tortuous executions the Romans used on Christians. There was no such thing as a quick death or an appeal process. Some were hoisted on tall poles, covered in tar and set on fire. Some were clothed in animal skins and sent into arenas to face wild animals. Some were given weapons and given the chance to fight for their lives against gladiators. Regardless of the method, they all died a tortuous death.

A confession of "Jesus is Lord" was not made lightly. If a person was willing to say it, they had to believe in their heart that God had raised Jesus from the dead. They had to believe that Jesus was truly God in the flesh. They were holding nothing back when they made that declaration. They were banking their entire life on it. That's the attitude of a person's heart when they become a Christian. It obviously doesn't mean you have to die today in America. But it does mean that you are staking your entire life upon it. You aren't holding anything back from him.

Several years ago one of my youth leaders came to me in great distress. It looked like he'd been crying and he said he needed to talk with me immediately. What he shared, shocked me. He had been leading a Bible study for high school guys for two years and he was such a fun-loving, crazy guy. But he told me he'd been leading a double life and he wanted to come clean. The party scene in Hermosa Beach had drawn him in and he was doing things he was ashamed of. In about 10 minutes he described the life of a crazy, out of control party animal. I'd never heard a confession quite like it.

When he was done, I asked him, "What do you want to do now?" And he said, "I want to totally surrender to Jesus." I turned in my Bible to Romans 10 and I explained these verses to him, just like I've explained them to you. I told him that a Christian doesn't live a double life like he'd been living. A Christian holds nothing back from God. A Christian banks their entire life on Jesus. He said, "that's what I want to do. I am completely surrendered to Jesus. He can have my entire life."

After we prayed together, I looked up at him and said, "I think you just became a Christian." He said, "I agree. I've known about Jesus for years but I hadn't been willing to submit to him. I'm finally holding nothing back from Jesus." Then I said, "I can't

believe you've been leading a Bible Study for two years!" And we both laughed at the irony and the newfound joy in his salvation.

Isn't that wonderful? That's the basic formula for anyone who becomes a follower of Jesus. We acknowledge we're a mess; we don't refuse to submit. We believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Then this belief in our heart has to come out of our mouth with a confession. This is the common experience of millions of people through history who've been a follower of Jesus. As you hear me explain this, it might occur to you that you've never done this. That means you aren't a Christian. But you could be. Perhaps these truths are penetrating your heart this morning in a new and powerful way and you want to surrender to Jesus today. That would be amazing. During our closing prayer, I'll guide you in a prayer to surrender to Jesus as your Lord.

If you're already a follow of Jesus, this next section of verses is for you. Get the progression of Paul's logic. First he talks about why the Jews have been temporarily set aside. Then he says anybody can be saved right now. Now he takes the last step and says since the Gospel is for everyone, go tell them!

**How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (verses 14-15).**

This is one of the great missionary texts in the Bible. Why do we have missionaries? Why do we hold Glow Hunt events? Why do we invite our friends to church at Easter? Why do we reach out? He says here, they're not going to be saved if we don't tell them. There are five links to this chain. He works it backwards.

1. He says you call on the name of the Lord to be saved.
2. How can they call unless they believe?
3. How can they believe unless they heard?
4. How can they hear unless they've been preached to?
5. How can they be preached to unless somebody goes to talk to them?

The experience of telling someone about Jesus can be terrifying. We get our identity all wrapped up in our relationship with Jesus and if someone rejects Jesus, we feel rejected. I get it. I feel that at times and I've trained lots of people in evangelism. Everyone feels this. Adding to the pressure, people on the Peninsula aren't very interested in talking about Jesus or spiritual matters.

But a proper understanding of the word "preach" will help us give increased thoughtfulness to our conversations. He's not talking about a professional pastor or missionary here. In Greek this word means "herald." A person makes an announcement

and spreads a message. Heralds were quite common in the 1st Century. They were like living newspapers. Sometimes they would enter a town with a message from another region. Sometimes they would enter a town before someone famous and herald their arrival.

The emphasis is not on the messenger but on the message. They could be boo'ed or ridiculed for the news they gave. Did that change the fact that a neighboring town was experiencing an outbreak of Smallpox? No. The herald's role was to simply "tell" the news. God wants everyone who's a Christian to "herald" the message of Jesus.

The point he's making is that God uses people to reach people. All of us came to Christ because of somebody, one way or the other. Even if you read a book, somebody had to write the book. Even if you watched a TV program, somebody had to produce the program. Our responsibility the moment we believed in our heart was to tell other people how they could do the same. If we don't tell our neighbors, who will?

In his book *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, Bill Hybels gives explanation to how this can be done.

## **Two Styles: Direct and Indirect**

### **Indirect**

You bring up spiritual matters without asking for a response. You drop comments into conversation about spirituality, church, God, etc. without asking them anything about themselves or their spiritual beliefs.

### **Direct**

You ask someone a question that requires a response. This approach doesn't wait for opportunities, it creates them. You straightforwardly raise a spiritual topic and see if a person is interested to talk. While you don't force spiritual discussions, you do open the door wide open.

### **The Indirect Method**

- "How's your year going?"
- "Well, financially, okay; family wise, pretty well; and spiritually, things are great. Which one do you want to talk about?"
- "Well, on weekends I like to coach my son's baseball team, work out and go to church, since I'm a pastor."
- "This morning I read the most interesting thing in my Bible ..."

With the Indirect Method you're floating an invitation out there. Nothing more. If they want to ask you a question or engage in a spiritual conversation with you, you let them determine that.

Unfortunately, this method gets a bit of a bad rap. People think, "Well, that's not really telling someone all the truths about Jesus." The incorrect misconception goes like this, "If you were really being a good herald you tell all information." But that's

not realistic. A herald would enter town, make their pronouncements and move on. People could talk to themselves about what the herald said. They could ask questions of the herald, if they were interested. Or people could ignore the herald. The herald's role was to tell, not convince people of their message.

Here's the most recent example of this in my family's life. Three weeks ago my wife went skiing with a group of moms and their kids. Amanda, our campus Kids Director was with the group as well, along with three non-yet believing ladies. As they were sitting around in the hotel one night, enjoying the fun company—the kids were blissfully happy—they'd had a great day on the slopes. It was one of those special moments in life. One of the not-yet believing ladies was so filled with happiness she said, "you all are so good. Ever since my dad died, I've been making it a point to hang around with good people. You're never bad. Right?" There was a pause in the room as each of them pondered how to respond. No one wanted to spoil the bliss of this moment, but how could the Christians in the group let such a comment go without a response?

So Cassie spoke up, "Well, I'm not always good. I'm bad sometimes. But it doesn't define me." And for the next five minutes Cassie had the chance to explain that no one is good. We all have ugliness and sin. She shared that most recently our new puppy has been bringing it out in her! She gets so angry when he disobeys on walks. She said, "That's not good. We all have that in us. The question is, What are we going to do with it?"

Cassie and Amanda, who was praying during this whole conversation, prayed for these women's hearts to wrestle with that question. That's the Indirect Method—she floated the truth out there and let them determine the next step.

### The Direct Method

- "I'm curious, do you ever think about spiritual matters?"
- "What's your spiritual background? Were you taught a particular religious perspective as you grew up?"
- "Do you ever wonder what happens to us when we die?"

In all of these examples, you are asking someone a direct question that requires them to engage you in a spiritual conversation. Usually this conversation involves some part or all of the Gospel message. It's up to each of us to prayerfully determine which method to use at what moments. But we're all given the role of a herald. Think of it this way—there's no Law telling us how to be a herald. Instead, like Romans 7:6 says, "***we serve in the new way of the Spirit.***"

Ask the Lord to prepare your heart to herald. Ask him to give you the courage to do it. Then step out in faith and do it.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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