

Evangelism

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark. If you don't know me, my name is Alfie, and I help out with the university ministry here at Watermark Church. And today we're continuing our series on what makes a healthy church. What is it that a healthy church looks like? What does it do?

And today we'll be talking about evangelism. Now, if you want to make a Christian feel embarrassed, awkward, a bit guilty, there are two things you can talk about.

All right, the first one is sex. The second one is evangelism. Now, if you're not married here, you don't have to worry about, you know, doing sex and the awkwardness that that is.

But if you're here and you're a Christian, whether you're married or single, if you're divorced, widowed, whatever your state is, if you're a Christian, you should be concerned about doing evangelism.

Now, as I talk to people and I think about what evangelism is and, you know, how people are doing it, I think people feel very awkward about it, about going to someone and telling them about their faith, talking to them about their relationship with God.

[1 : 1 1] And I think that's one of the big reasons why we don't do it. Why, as a church, we don't evangelize? It's because we think it's awkward. And I think sometimes for the times that we do evangelize, it's because we're feeling a bit guilty.

You know, we've been told, you know, if you're a Christian, you probably should be evangelizing, doing outreach, being missional. You know, we're told to do these things. So we come up to our neighbor and we're all, like, stressed and tensed up.

And, you know, we just evangelize all over them. It's like we've thrown up. And it's a mess. And it's terrible. Because, you know, they're like, ooh, that was a bit awkward. And you're like, I'm really, really sorry. You're trying to clean it up. You know, they feel like it's a project.

And, you know, hopefully, if you're lucky, you know, you never see them again. If you work in the same place, then you have to go the long way to the photocopier. But I think a lot of us feel like that about evangelism.

We feel like we don't know what we're doing. We feel like we're always just throwing up the gospel on people. And it's not messy and it's not pretty. I think a lot of people think that you need to have a special gift of evangelism to share the gospel with people.

[2 : 1 8] But I reckon, I think that we're all evangelists. We're all talking and sharing the gospel of something or another. C.S. Lewis says that, you know, we praise things that we like.

You know, whether it's people or food or music or movies. You know, we talk about it. And we don't just talk about it and say they're great. We invite people to enjoy it. Earlier today, Eric was telling me, you know, the empire is going to strike back on Monday.

You need to come and watch it with me. All right? And he was inviting me to come and be a part of it. Because Eric watching Star Wars is great. But it's even better if he brings me along with it.

We all evangelize something. If you know me pretty well, I'm a big ice cream evangelist. All right? And I like to share the gospel of ice cream. All right? It's something like this. You know, ice cream is delicious.

It's fantastic. Except for chocolate. Chocolate's terrible. Vanilla is the best. All right? Vanilla ice cream is the best. And you need to have some. Whether it's summer or winter.

[3 : 19] It's actually even better in winter. All right? And you need to come with me and have ice cream. Because the problem you guys have right now is that your stomachs do not have ice cream in them. That is a problem that needs to be fixed.

All right? And if you catch me on a good day, not only will I tell you about this, I will bring you along to my favorite ice cream shop. And I will buy you ice cream. All right? And that's the gospel of ice cream.

That's not awkward. I think I do that a lot. Too much probably. All right? But, you know, we're all evangelists. We're all talking about something. And there's always something that we are evangelizing.

But evangelism is a huge topic. All right? As I was preparing this sermon, when I practiced it yesterday, it took me about an hour. So I had to cut out a lot of things.

All right? I can't say everything that I want to say. But I think what I'm going to try and say is the things that I think are most important about evangelism. Things that I think that we need to hear as a church.

[4 : 21] Things that I need to hear. All right? So I'm going to start by giving a definition of what evangelism is. We're going to talk about why we do evangelism.

I'm going to talk about why we don't do evangelism. And as we come to look at our passage, as we look at Ephesians 2, we want to look at that and see what evangelism has to do with sin.

And what evangelism has to do with love. All right? How does that sound? All right? So let's get into it. As I've been reading and preparing and looking around, I tried to distill a definition of evangelism that was simple, that was easy to remember.

And what I came up with was this. That evangelism is presenting the gospel message in the hopes that there is a response of faith.

Presenting the gospel message in the hopes of a response of faith. It is coming to someone and giving them and showing them the person of Jesus Christ. And saying that Jesus is the solution.

[5 : 34] He's the solution to our biggest problem, which is sin and the judgment that we're facing because of that. And inviting them to come and embrace the forgiveness that God offers and to repent of their sins and to follow him.

That is evangelism. It's talking about what we talk about every week here at Watermark. It's talking about the cross and calling people to live lives that are changed because of it.

I mean, I think along with the definition of evangelism, we need to say what evangelism isn't. Because I think sometimes we do things and we call it evangelism when really it isn't.

All right? And they're not bad things to do. They're probably good things. And, you know, I think sometimes we say that I'm going to hang out with my non-Christian friends and that's evangelism. Or I'm going to go and, you know, feed a homeless person and that's evangelism.

Or I'm going to, you know, do apologetics and that's evangelism. They're good things. They're things that, as Christians, we should be doing. But they are not evangelism. And I think there are other times when we do think we're evangelizing.

[6 : 37] You know, when we're presenting Jesus as a solution to a problem. But the problem we're bringing isn't the problem of sin, what the Bible says. You know, we'll say that, you know, Jesus is our friend for when we're lonely.

And that's why you need Jesus. Or Jesus is an advocator for justice. And that's why we need Jesus. Or we'll say that, you know, Jesus is confidence for when you're feeling, you know, meek.

Or he is a doctor for when you're feeling sick. And, you know, Jesus is many of those things. But that's not what the gospel is primarily about.

That's not what evangelism primarily is about. Because, you know what, if you tell me that the gospel is about being confident, then the moment that I find something else to be confident in, you know, my good looks or something, I don't know.

Definitely my good looks. Then I won't need the gospel anymore. I won't need Jesus. But the gospel is talking about sin because there is no other way except for Jesus.

[7 : 46] Now, don't take my word for it. There's a theologian by the name of J.I. Packer. Big, huge guy, theologically. And he said this. He said, evangelism means exhorting sinners to accept Christ Jesus as their savior.

Recognizing that in the most final and far-reaching sense, they are lost, that they are damned without him. It is not merely informing them of the gospel, but inviting them to be a part of it.

It's not just informing. I think we can do that. I think that's, you know, evangelism, vomit, is a lot of informing. But it's also inviting our friends, our family, the people we work with, the guy we're next to on the bus, to be a part of this story, to be a part of what God is doing, to be saved.

Now, evangelism is part of this series of what we're talking about in what it means to be a healthy church. And I think we've talked about community.

We've talked about prayer. We've talked about discipleship. And I think evangelism ties in with all of these things. And, you know, I'm not going to talk about those things, but I'll leave you guys to think about, you know, how is it that evangelism connects with prayer, with community, with discipleship?

[9 : 10] But I think the way in which we evangelize is important. I think the way that I would evangelize to my cousin is different from the way in which I would evangelize to someone sitting next to me on the bus is different from the way I would evangelize and share the gospel with one of my friends here in Hong Kong.

Because I think each of them, I interact with them in different ways. My friends here in Hong Kong, I get to see them every week, and I'll hopefully be doing that for, you know, the next couple of years until they get their PR and, you know, run off somewhere else.

All right? But I can take time and be slow and learn them, learn their stories, get to know where the gospel hits them. What are the sins that I can show Jesus as being the solution to?

But if there's somebody next to me on the bus, I may never see them again. As a general rule, I say if I'm not going to see them again, I will share the gospel right there and then. I know the students, they get to see me kind of going off track a lot when we're, you know, when we're having our student gatherings, when we're doing group discussions, because there'll be somebody who's there who's not a believer.

And I know the questions say we should be talking about this, this, and this. But I think very often I'll try and change it because I don't know if this student is going to come back again. I don't know if I'm ever going to see this student again, but I want them to hear the gospel.

[10 : 33] You know, I think we should evangelize. I think there's so many opportunities that we have to evangelize. There's so many reasons for evangelizing.

I think we evangelize because the gospel is good news. You know, we evangelize because Jesus didn't just die for the people who are already Christians. He died for the whole world.

You know, we evangelize because it stops us as a church from being inward focused and spending our whole days like inspecting our navels. Right? If we do evangelism because Jesus commands us to.

I think we should be as a church out there and telling people about the good news of Jesus because that is what Jesus tells the church to do. His last words before he went up to heaven in the Great Commission, you can find it in Matthew 28.

He tells them, go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them. Teach them to observe everything I have commanded and I will be with you always. There's an entire someone on evangelism there.

[11 : 37] But, you know, I think Packer, he sums it up in this way and he says to the Christian, he says, always and everywhere, the servants of God, that is, the people who are believers, are under orders to evangelize.

I don't think that it's possible for you to be a Christian and not be evangelizing because if you're not evangelizing, then you're not being obedient to the command of Christ.

You know, I think the disciple making and the baptizing that Jesus calls us to be doing in Matthew 28 isn't going to happen if we're not looking for opportunities and we're not seeking out people and places that we can pour the gospel into.

You don't have to look far. I'm sure there are plenty of situations. For me, one of the ways in which I've had a chance to share the gospel has got to do, again, with ice cream. There's an ice cream shop in my neighborhood, which I really, really like.

And, you know, I know I've taken maybe a dozen of you guys there because it's fantastic. But I go there quite often. I may or may not have gone twice in one day. And I go there and I meet the people there.

[12 : 54] And, you know, and I know Mark and his girlfriend Karina and Bobby and Elvis and Michelle and Ivor. And I go there and I share my life with them. And I'm sharing them in their lives as well.

I'm giving them suggestions for better ice cream flavors. And I'm hearing about the struggles in their lives. And I'm celebrating their victories with them. And I think over the past couple of years, over the past year, I've gotten to know them, you know, fairly well.

This ice cream shop and I actually share a birthday, which is pretty cool. And so around my birthday, I went, I took a bottle of wine over. And Mark, the owner, and I, we sat down and we started talking.

All right? And we talked about, you know, his life and what he was doing and what he planned to do next. And we talked about how he always felt dissatisfied. And I had an opportunity to share the gospel with him. All right?

Now, it was 2 a.m. in the morning, but I did my best. And you know what? He would not have had 20 seconds for me if it weren't for the past year of relationship building, of hearing his life and knowing his struggles.

[13 : 59] There wouldn't have been a real opportunity for me to share the gospel if I didn't invest and spend that time. Now, Michelle and Ivor, they're a lovely couple, but their English isn't that great and my Cantonese isn't up to scratch.

So if any of you wants to come and, you know, come and be a part of their lives, you know, let me know. But, you know, you don't have to come to my ice cream shop. There are places where you guys are going every day, where you're interacting with people.

Whether it's like your cha-tan-tang or if you're going to, you know, the guy who mixes your drinks at your favorite bar. Wherever it is, there are people that we're interacting with every day. Get to know them.

Get to know their stories. And see how is it that the gospel comes and speaks to them. You know, like I said, there are so many opportunities for us as Christians to be reaching out.

But I think at the same time, we make many reasons, make many excuses not to. You know, we might say that, well, it's a little bit awkward, you know, talking about something as personal as faith.

[15 : 00] Or you might say, actually, I don't know how. Or, you know, actually, it's not my job. Like, that's the job of a professional evangelist. That's the job of the pastors and the speakers to do that.

I think sometimes we say that, you know, I'm not good enough of a Christian to share the gospel. Or we say, I don't want to offend people. You know what?

Those are excuses. They're all excuses. And if I had things my way, we'd stay here until 4 p.m. And I'd tell you all the reasons why those are terrible excuses. But I'm not going to do that.

But if you're coming and you're saying, I don't know how to share my faith. I don't know how to share the gospel. Then the good news is that I can help you with that.

I can help you with that. In fact, we've been talking about evangelism over the summer. We talked about the six ways to live. If you go outside, you'll see some of these little bookmarks.

[16 : 02] And there are some little pictures here that help you go through and share the gospel with your friend. Talk about God, Jesus, and sin. And so about half of you were here over the summer.

So if you don't know what this is and how it works, ask the person next to you. All right? And they'll explain it to you. They're outside on the tables. Grab some. There is a really useful tool. You can also, if you look in your bulletin, there's a little link here to a little YouTube video where Eric actually explains it to you.

And he does a fantastic job. So if you don't know how to share your faith, if you don't know how to evangelize, now you don't have any more excuses. All right? So I've dealt with that.

I want to go to Ephesians 2. Because as I think about the reasons why I don't evangelize, I think it's got nothing to do with these reasons.

It's got nothing to do with it being awkward. I think it's got to do with the way I think about the gospel. I think that many times I don't think the gospel is amazing.

[17 : 15] And there are many times when the gospel is just, you know, another thing. And there are times when I forget how serious sin is, when I forget what it is that Jesus does on the cross for us.

And so why would I evangelize if the gospel isn't precious to me? Why would I evangelize if it wasn't changing me every day?

I love this passage in Ephesians 2. It talks about us as humans. It talks about God.

It talks about his character. And then it gives us a little mission to be going on. And so I hope that as we're looking at this passage that you don't feel like I'm trying to beat you up with the Bible.

I'm not trying to do that. If it does feel like that, come talk to me afterwards and I will apologize profusely. But I hope that looking at this passage that we would be encouraged, that we would be reminded of the gospel.

[18 : 19] We'd be reminded of what it is that Jesus does. That we would look at the cross and we would say, this isn't just mine to keep. This is for me to be sharing.

So Ephesians 2. Paul begins by writing to this church in Ephesus. And he tells them that right in the beginning that you are dead in your trespasses and in your sin.

He reminds the church of what they were like before they met Jesus. Before they had this transformation of the gospel. He tells them that they're basically like zombies.

They're walking and they're dead because of their sin. And he tells them that the sin comes from different ways. It says that the sin is coming and it's absorbing into them from the world around them.

They're saying their sin comes from, you know, them following the prince of the power of the air, from following Satan. He says that their sin comes from their flesh and the passions of their flesh and their mind which they are following.

[19 : 31] All right? And Paul tells them these things and he says that this is bad. It's not good. But the most significant thing that Paul has to say is that sin isn't general badness.

All right? Because I think, I don't have to tell you guys that you're bad people. You know, that you lie and you cheat and you steal every now and then. I think if we all sit there and search our hearts, we know that we're bad.

But what he says is that our sins are offense and rebellion against God and they make us children of wrath. Children of wrath, if you're American.

All right? That our inheritance as sinners is death. Death and decay and destruction while we're alive and death and punishment after we're dead eternally.

You know, the Bible says that when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden, that their sin wasn't against the tree. That their sin wasn't against each other or against the snake or whoever.

[20 : 51] That their sin was against God. It was them trying to dethrone God and become the authority, to become the king in their own lives. There's this Hungarian proverb and it says that Adam bit the apple.

And for all his descendants, for all of us, our teeth are still aching. And we see that in the world. All right? We see it in death and destruction and pollution and rust and age and in decay.

We see it in racism and war and suffering and violence. We see it in bullying and hatefulness. I see it in the world.

We see it in the world. We see it in the world. I see it growing in my heart. That I am sinful. Right down to my core. And without God, my inheritance is death.

You know, I think that we don't think sin is that bad. C.S. Lewis used to write that many people think that a little bit of time and a little bit of care will cover up sins.

[22 : 01] That as time progresses, you know, the sins don't become bad. And, you know, he says that that's probably not true. He says that time doesn't cover sins.

And the Bible says that only blood can cover sins. I think a lot of times when we look at sin, we think we... Here we go. We think it's like this.

This is an old iPhone 3GS, right? It's, oh, seven years old now? I don't know how old these things are. And, you know, it probably needs a new battery.

If you probably got it a case, it would look pretty. And we think our sin is like this. Just a little bit of care. You know, a little bit of cleaning and it's good.

But... That is what our sin is like. You see that?

[23 : 02] Our sin is death and destruction. You can't bring that back together. If you swept that up and took it to the Apple store, they would laugh at you.

And I think what many people think is that our sins is something that we can fix, that we can sweep up together and we can make it right. But the Bible tells us that, no, that this is the end.

That in our sin, we are dead. Sin doesn't make us bad. Sin makes us dead. Now, the gospel comes in and it says, but God.

It says, but God. God is rich in mercy. He loves us with this great, amazing love. You know, God loves us and it comes in different ways.

It says that he's merciful. That even though God is just and he is righteous and he can... He has the right to destroy us for our sins. It says that he is gracious.

[24 : 09] That he doesn't just offer us forgiveness. He doesn't just offer us, you know, a free pass. But he invites us into riches. He invites us to become his children. To become heirs with Christ.

He says he shows us these immeasurable riches. They're not hidden from us. It says that, you know, in Philippians you read that Jesus took off the clothes, his heavenly robes, and he put on humanity.

And he humbled himself to show us the love of God. The Bible says that this isn't free.

But that there's a price for it. That being restored cost Jesus his life. It cost God, his son.

It cost blood and tears. It cost a sacrifice. You know, I think that God is merciful.

[25 : 18] That God is gracious. Might be the hardest part to get. I think I struggle with that. You know, as I sit there and I'm thinking about my sin, I think, how can God forgive me?

How can a God who is good and loving tolerate the dirt and filth in my heart? You know, I was on the minibus one day with one of my friends, Murray.

We're on the same rugby team. And we're heading to one of our games. And this guy came and sat next to me. And it was a very annoying, very, very talkative guy. And he kept asking questions about me, where I was from.

I said Hong Kong. And he didn't believe me. He wanted to know, like, no, no, you're black. You must be from Africa. Here's a map pointed out to me. He wanted to know exactly where I was from.

And, you know, the conversation went on. And, you know, I tried to give short answers so he wouldn't, you know, keep going. But he kept going. He kept going. And we talked about corruption in Kenya. And then we talked about ISIS and Syria.

[26 : 29] All right? We talked about many things. It was only like 15 minutes. All right? But he started talking about ISIS. And he started asking, you know, what's wrong?

What do you think is going on in ISIS and with Syria? And, you know, this light bulb clicked in my head. All right. This is a chance. You know? I can share the gospel. I think he was coming to me as, like, an African that I would be the expert on, you know, Middle Eastern, you know, interrelations.

All right? I am not an expert on any of those things. But I do know something about the gospel. And so, you know, I told him, you know, the problem probably isn't terrorism or, I don't know, terrorism or sociopolitical unrest, you know, democracy or lack of democracy.

I told him that I thought the problem was sin. And as he sat there and we talked about it, he was like, yeah, okay, you know, I can see that. I told him, you know, sin isn't the things that we do that are bad, that, you know, that they're the offenses that we do against God.

And he was like, all right, yeah, I get that. And I told him that Christ makes a way for us to be right with God. And he said, no. All right? I can believe that the problem in Syria is sin.

[27 : 38] I can believe that I am sinful and that I'm accountable to God. But he couldn't believe that God would make a way for him to be right with God. He couldn't believe that God would be merciful and gracious.

But the Bible says that's true. The Bible says that Jesus is merciful, that Jesus is gracious, that he gives himself for us.

And I think that we forget that, that I forget that. That there are times when I'm thinking about my sin and I don't think it's that bad. And so I don't think that sin is a problem for other people.

But when I remember my sin, I then think that, well, God isn't gracious, God isn't merciful. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says that God is those things.

You know, I think that if the gospel is true, right? If the gospel is true that we're sinners in need of saving, if the gospel is true and it says that Jesus is amazing and loving and gracious and he offers himself and calls us to repent and to trust in him, then this is amazing news, right?

[28 : 54] Right? Isn't it amazing that we can take these scraps of broken phone and God will give us eternal life? He'll call us his son? Right?

Isn't the gospel amazing that when we come with our broken and sinful lives, God gives us, you know, an iPhone 8, which is perfect and will never break and the screen will never crack and the battery will last forever and you'll never get a junk call ever.

Isn't that amazing? Isn't the gospel amazing? I think I forget this so often. I need to be reminded of it every day.

That God saves. You know, Ephesians 2 says that our salvation is a gift of grace so that no one can boast.

And that means that I don't get to boast in my salvation. I don't get to say that I made it. All right? It also means that if I share the gospel with someone and they come to faith that I don't get to boast in that either because it is God's work.

[30 : 10] You know, God creates us and he makes us to be like him and the people around us, they're in his image, but they're broken and they need a savior.

And that's what evangelism is. It's calling people and saying, God has shown me these immeasurable riches, these amazing things.

And I want to show them to you. The Bible calls us to love and to be gracious and to be merciful and to show God's amazing love to those people around us.

Penn Jillette is a comedian from the group Penn and Teller. And, you know, he put this YouTube video up talking about an interaction that he had with a Christian, right?

Where this Christian had come up after a show and given him a Bible and he thought about it. He said, what did he say? He asked this question. How hateful must you be not to evangelize?

[31 : 13] He says that if you knew that life and death, that heaven and hell are in the balance and you were convinced of these things and you didn't tell your neighbor, you must not like your neighbor.

You'd probably hate them. But I don't want to beat you up and say that you guys are all hateful. I mean, I think really what the case is, I think that we love ourselves more. I think that we love our comfort more than we love our colleagues.

That we love peace and quiet more than we love our parents. That we love our convenience more than the person next to us on the bus.

I mean, how many of us would stay those extra five minutes on the bus and miss your stop and be late for a meeting to share the gospel? I think I love my punctuality more than I love the stranger on the bus.

And I think it's not just the people that we're around, but the people that have relationships with us. Do I value my friendship with my friend more than I value my friend's eternal soul?

[32 : 28] Do I value my work environment more than I value the soul of my lost colleague? Is an easy life, an easy conversation worth more than the lost soul of your favorite market stole person?

I think that's why we do outreach. I think that's why Watermark is here. That's why we're on the western side of Hong Kong.

Because we believe as a church that the people in Bel Air and in Kennedy Town and at HKU are worth hearing the gospel. It's worth doing a church and being a church in a place where it's difficult to find spaces to meet.

Because being a church in an awkward auditorium at West Island School is worth it. It's worth the souls of the people around us, the people in our community.

So, have we forgotten what sin is like?

[33 : 48] Is sin a big deal? Is Jesus gracious? Is God merciful?

Are these things not amazing that we would share them with the people around us? Do we love the people around us enough to forego comfort, to forego ease of life, to forego convenience, to share with them the only thing that is going to save them from the judgment of God?

Amen. Now, I think if you're here today and you're not a Christian, I hope that you've heard what I've been saying.

That without Christ, you're dead. And Christ is calling us to be alive.

He's calling you to put your faith in Him, to trust Him with your soul because He is trustworthy. If you're a Christian here, I think evangelism is important.

[35 : 06] I think it's important for us to be a healthy church because it's about obedience. It's about following what Jesus calls us to do. It's about loving the people that God loves.

It's about making friends and being in relationship and community with those around us. It's about praying and asking God for opportunities to share the gospel.

It's about our witness. It's about the way that we live our lives. Living them in a way that people would listen to us when we share with them.

It's about sin. Evangelism is about my need of a Savior. It's about your need of a Redeemer.

I think evangelism draws a stark contrast, and we see it in Ephesians 2.

[36 : 07] As in evangelism, what we want to do, what we want to share with people is that once I was dead in my trespasses and in my sin, but I've been made alive with Christ.

That once I followed the world and I was led by Satan. That once I was a children of wrath, that I was destined for death, but now I have a relationship with God, that I'm a child of mercy and love and grace.

The gospel says that we were alienated from God, but by the blood of the cross, we were brought close to him. Watermark.

This is good news. This is good news for Hong Kong. This is good news for your friends and your family and your colleagues.

This is good news for the person next to you on the MTR. Church, can we pray about this? Can we pray about opportunities to share this news with people?

[37 : 23] Let's pray. Father God, you are amazing. God, we love you because you are gracious and merciful in saving us.

God, I confess that I don't love your gospel as much as I should, and I don't value it to share it with those around me. I confess that I love myself more than I love my neighbors, that I love my convenience more than I love their souls.

God, I thank you that you save us. I thank you that you give us your only son to be our salvation. I thank you that even though we are doomed, you reached out to us with love and mercy and grace.

And I thank you that you've given us people who have shared the gospel with us. And I thank you for these people here who do care about you and your people and who are going out and looking for ways to share this great news.

God, I pray that you would set a fire in us, a zeal for your word and for your gospel, that we would go and we would carry it wherever we go, that our minds and our hearts would be overflowing with your greatness and that it would come out and that you would give us people to share with, that you would work and that you would be returning hearts so that when we share that they hear and they believe and they put their trust in you.

[39 : 13] God, I pray for Hong Kong. I pray for this place that doesn't know you. I pray that you would begin turning and changing hearts, that you would begin drawing us to you and to join with you in reaching these people.

I pray that you would show us people, that you'd show us one, two, three people this week that we can love and share this gospel with, that we can share this amazing good news with.

Amen.