



Episode 5: Evangelism is Regularly Celebrated in Churches.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Kevin Palau 00:03

This is the City Gospel Movements podcast where we have conversations about church unity, serving cities and sharing the good news.

Ben Jack & Lizzie Burke 00:16

You're listening to exploring evangelism is a collaborative podcast series by City Gospel Movements and Advance. We're your hosts. I'm Lizzy Burke in Portland, Oregon. And I'm Ben Jack in Manchester, England. Join us as we explore five common myths that hold people back from sharing their faith.

Lizzie Burke 00:36

Hey, everyone, welcome to the final episode of The Exploring Evangelism Myths Podcast Series. Today, we want to start off with a little thought exercise and ask you when is the last time you've heard someone's testimony of when they came to Christ. Maybe you heard the story of a friend from earlier on in school who walked through the hard knocks of life and has come around to follow Jesus. Or maybe you've heard the story of a relative out of family gathering their testimony, and I want you to think also, were you with them in their home? Were you at church? Were you at a camp or retreat? Where were you when you were hearing these testimonies? You know, so often we talked to people who are believers, and we asked them, when did you hear a current testimony of someone coming to faith? And oddly, sometimes they can't think of a time in recent history when they heard a story of someone coming to faith. And we want to talk about the final myth today, evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches, because we believe hearing current testimonies is really critical. But Ben, it's not just current testimonies, we need to hear what are the kinds of stories do we need to hear?

Ben Jack 01:53

Well, we to hear all kinds of stories and we love stories, don't we, as human beings, I mean, I love going to the movies as one of my favorite pastimes. And it's been tricky during the days of COVID, to, to go to the movie theater. So I have to get my fix by reading going old school and you know, cashing in on Netflix or something. But we love a good story. We love to get caught up in the twists and the turns. And I particularly like real true life stories. I was watching something recently on Netflix, and I got like two thirds of the way through this series. And I was like, this is really good. It's really interesting. And then I found out that he was actually completely fictional. It appeared like it was a true story. But it actually turned out that it was a fictional thing that was kind of riffing on true life stuff. And, and for some reason, like that was less inclined to finish the series after that, I was like, I'm not that bothered



anymore. Like it is, yeah, it's interesting. And I like fiction. And I like all the Marvel movies and stuff. But I thought this was a true story. And now that it's turned out to not be a true story, it kind of had less interest for me. And there's just something so deeply profound about hearing about other people's experiences of your life, the twists, the turns, the emotional beats, and all that kind of stuff. Do you do you have like a favorite true life, real person, inspirational story, Lizzie?

Lizzie Burke 03:04

Oh, well, I think the first person who comes to mind is Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Ben Jack 03:08

Oh, yeah!

Lizzie Burke 03:08

His example is just, I mean, that's profound for me.

Ben Jack 03:12

Yeah. Incredible. And like you read Bonhoeffer, his testimony of his life, either directly from his own work or one of his biographies. And you start to question whether you're even a Christian at all. You're like, wow, this this guy, you know, but but not in a like defeated way in like an aspiration. Are you like, No, no, I do, Lord, I want to get closer to you. And I want to take some of this stuff seriously, and costly grace and cheap grace. And I want to you know, apply that to my life and not the cheap bit, the costly bit, and figure that out, and live for You, Jesus. And so it's incredibly inspirational. And it helps us to think about our own lives before God, but also, when we're thinking about people coming to Christ for the first time, that it can draw us back to our own first moments of discovery of who Jesus is. And those precious first steps that we took, whether that was you know, at an event, and we can kind of pinpoint a day or whether it was over a longer period of time that we kind of started to get get a grasp of who Jesus was and give our life to Him. These stories are essential. But guess what, not just the story of like you said, people coming to faith in the first place, but also the story of people who've gone out to win others for Christ, the evangelism stories themselves.

Lizzie Burke 04:20

Yeah, totally. And you've shared also that it's not just the success stories we want to hear, but it's also the Oh, awkward fumbling over my words, stories, right?

Ben Jack 04:31

Oh, for sure. I was, I was reading a book recently, about a month ago from an evangelist type person and, and I got about halfway through it, and I had to stop reading it because it just started to irritate me because example of like, evangelistic method that they gave in the book was then backed up by them personally applying that method and seeing like perfect results every single time. And I don't want to be disparaging of those praise God for those results. But I was just thinking for the average reader Actually, this seems unattainable. And of course, we know that with the Spirit of God at work, anything is possible and God could yield those results in your life. But in my experience, actually, that's not always the way that that people will reject the gospel when we share it with them at times. And it's



important for us to not set a false idea. If you go and share the gospel in this way, people will always get saved. Well, no, they won't. And so what happens when people don't hear stories of challenge or even, you know, failure in kind of speech marks is that people get discouraged when it doesn't play out how it did in the book or the storyland version.

Lizzie Burke 05:31

Yeah, definitely. So let's shift. So the myth that we're talking about today is evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches. And like we mentioned in this introduction, you may have heard stories from your friends or family gathering. But what we want to emphasize is telling these current testimonies in the context of church and this is a myth, because oftentimes, we get caught up in a specific Sunday rhythm and don't question where there are blind spots. And you know, I think if many of us, especially if you've grown up in the church, you can probably like nail down to the minute what your churches program is, right? Like, right here, there's a worship song two, three, then you'd have a little greeting time. I mean, this the way it is, in the US, maybe a little bit different in the UK for you know, these churches. But, you know, I was interviewing pastors, and I've mentioned this in another episode in this series, but with another, you know, a couple other ministry leaders in the Portland, Oregon area, we interviewed 50 pastors between 2019 and 2020, about evangelism in their church. And the question that caused the most lightbulb moments for these pastors was, how do you celebrate evangelism in your church? And he's pastors, It was really funny, because they were like, Oh, we don't do that very well. You know?

Ben Jack 06:57

oh, no, like, a proper light bulb moment.

Lizzie Burke 06:59

Yes. But you know, it wasn't shaming, it was like an aha moment. Why don't we do that? That would be so easy. We could, you know, insert a simple story in our announcement time. I mean, this can be simple and have a really big impact. And so yeah, we often just get caught up in a Sunday rhythm and don't question, hey, what are we missing here? What were some blind spots? And through these interviews, we heard a lot of pastors say, oh, we're not really good at celebrating. And here's a few clips of what some of these pastors sounded like.

Guest #1 07:31

Mostly, during worship, pause the song and share, like a little bit of an overview from their interview. Yeah, you know, we haven't really celebrated those victories of people sharing.

Guest #2 07:45

We're trying to more regularly just on a Sunday morning, morning, incorporate people's testimonies into the Liturgy of worship. I wish we could say that we're doing that more regularly, whenever we do, we always go, "that was awesome".

Guest #3 08:02



We probably don't celebrate that, well. Actually. It happens a lot more than people know about, which then reveals that we don't really celebrate it well.

Lizzie Burke 08:12

So Ben, do you feel like we get caught up in a Sunday rhythm when it comes to regular church gatherings? What is it like for you, especially in your context?

Ben Jack 08:22

Oh, yeah, for sure, I think that can be a problem for everybody is that you kind of slip into a rhythm and a routine and, and if something important or key is not part of that, you don't notice that it's missing because you you never had it, and you just get used to the routine that you're in. And you know, we don't always like lots of change, do we? And and so to kind of justify bringing something new to the table, we have to show its worth and also that people have to get their heads around whether or not they can figure out how to do it well. And is it gonna be awkward? Is it going to be weird and stuff. So you have to jump through a lot of those hoops, but it's not just kind of making space for it in our church gatherings. It's making space for it in our own lives as we're going about the ministry that we're going about because another problem that we have is that we get so caught up in, in working with God in the world and letting him work in and through us that we we sometimes forget to actually just stop and reflect on some of the amazing things that He's done. One of the biggest regrets I have in my life, Lizzie is not keeping a journal.

Lizzie Burke 09:20

Oh On what's gone right-do you a journal, you keep a journal? Oh my goodness, I'm so erratic. Sometimes I start and I'm like, wow, I'm in the flow. I've got this down for a few weeks. And then all of a sudden, I'm just not interested at all. I'm more of like a bullet point person. Write a couple bullet points, but people who write pages, I'm inspired by to say the least.

Ben Jack 09:42

Well, I'm inspired by all of you because I'm not a pages person or a bullet point. I'm a nothing person. That's it sounds very condemning of myself. I'm a nothing person. But when it comes to, when it comes to journaling. That's the truth of it. I just, I've never had the discipline sit down and yet it is one of the great regrets and something that I'm trying to get better at now. Just keeping notes on my phone as I go, because to be able to reflect back on what God has done and some of the little ways in which he's worked, it's easy for me to remember, you know, big salvation fruit type stories. Of course, that's easy. But actually, I think you miss sometimes some of the beautiful, profound things that God has taught you in some of the less obvious situations, because you're so busy just getting on with it.

Lizzie Burke 10:23

Yeah, no, that's true. I was recently talking to a ministry leader, who works in New York City, and her name is Jen, and she works for an interdenominational ministry. So she's helping churches across New York City strengthen their mission and outreach kind of initiatives. And she was gathering people from Cru, interdiversity and Young Life and, and she was saying, Hey, could we work together in New York City to strengthen evangelism? But she said, just at the beginning of our meeting, we decided, hey, let's



just talk about what's the evangelism temperature in your life? Like, were you having gospel conversations, let's just inspire each other by current stories. And she said, we spent the first you know, 10, 15 minutes doing that. And she said, I'm really sad to say, we don't do that in our ministry. It was so inspiring hearing, oh, I had this one conversation with my neighbor, or, hey, my colleague, who I've been talking to, and they've been really kind of keeping me at arm's length is now starting to open up and ask questions about God and spirituality. And she said, we just felt energy raised in the room, and it was awesome.

Ben Jack 11:31

So we get we have this myth, because as you said, we get caught up in our Sunday routines, and we don't really question what we're up to, necessarily always, and it just kind of slips by. And then we make assumptions that we-we do it and we also just cracking on all the time just trying to get the job done. Again, we kind of forget that we haven't kept record of what God has been doing. We've missed some really important stories. But why else would have missed like this exist?

Lizzie Burke 11:54

Well, unfortunately, we assume we actually have stories to tell. And this is in no way meant to be condemning or shaming. But I mean, I can just share a story from a pastor and city leader who we know, in Nebraska, and he has planted churches, all throughout his ministry. And he said that in his earlier church plant, he asked his staff of 12 people at a staff meeting, hey, we want to be outward focus, we want to be sharing the Gospel regularly. Let's share the stories between the 12 of us staff members of sharing our faith in the last year. And hardly any of them could mention stories, only three stories between the 12 of them, they could say, hey, in the last year, we've shared the Gospel three times. And now he's like, Okay, this is a problem. We need to, to believe that God wants to work through our lives. And we need to believe that he has put people in our lives that we can share the Gospel with. So let's just this week, let's ask God for opportunities. They go through the week, they come back, and they're telling dozens of stories. And these aren't like, Oh, this person came to Christ. But hey, I had this conversation, hey, I invited this person to church. And it was the simple things like that. And now years later, they are one of the most evangelistic churches that we know. And they have this mantra, which is out of the seats and into the streets. So they are living it out. But you know, they started off and they said, Oh, we don't really have stories to tell. So how can we celebrate evangelism in our church, if we don't even have the stories to tell?

Ben Jack 13:37

Totally, that's such a good illustration of the blind spot thing again, as well. And the fact that it is kind of cyclical, it's like a self empowered cycle. It's like you, you're not sharing stories, because you don't think you have any stories to share, or you've got a bit of a blind spot. But then that's not then encouraging and empowering people to go out and get stories. So then you don't have any stories to share. So you don't share any stories. And then nobody goes in shares. And it's just like the cycle continues and continues. At some point, you have to get intentional about breaking the cycle. And look what happened for this church in Nebraska is incredible.

Lizzie Burke 14:09



Yeah, you can change the culture of your life, the culture of church, it can change. So, you know, we hear this, this myth that evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches. But Ben, what are some ways that this myth kind of illustrates itself in real life?

Ben Jack 14:24

Well, I think one of the things that we do is we tend to, like seek specific opportunity to shine a light on salvation and salvation through an evangelistic efforts. And one of the main ways that that's gonna play out is through baptism. I imagine most people you've heard a testimony in church, it's most likely to have been during a baptism. Of course, there are other times and some churches do this really well at other times of the year and have it as a regular part of this services. But for many churches, baptism is kind of like seen as the, this is the moment that you know this person is going to make a public declaration of their faith. They're going to invite family colleagues, friends, hopefully non Christians, it's going to be a seeker friendly service and, and a great opportunity for the Gospel to be proclaimed. And this person can give testimony to what God's done in their life. And I'm like, yes, and amen to all of those things, praise God. But why are we only doing this at a baptism service? Like there are so many opportunities for us to celebrate what God is doing through people's lives. And guess what? It's not just for evangelism in the church, like, oh, invite your friends along, they can hear about it. And it'd be a great advantage of this opportunity. Yeah, fantastic. But what about like your regular Sunday week in week out, where maybe the you know, the average non Christian is not wandering in off the street, but the people of God needs to be encouraged and built up. But we're kind of reducing it just to these special occasions like a baptism service.

Lizzie Burke 15:45

Yeah. And sometimes these special occasions are once a year, or twice a year. And we talked to a pastor in California named Kevin Harney with organic outreach, and he says, pastors need to remind their people about evangelism every 30 days. Because if we're not sharing stories, reminding them of, of ways they can share their faith, it won't stick. 30 days is a minimum. One, it really highlights that climactic moment, right? And we've talked about in this series, evangelism is about a moment and a process and-

Ben Jack 16:21

Yeah, exactly.

Lizzie Burke 16:22

But it's also we need it to be more frequent, right?

Ben Jack 16:25

Absolutely. As often as possible. I was speaking at worship conference a few years ago, and there was a panel discussion at the end of Q & A. And people were asking, How can we be more diverse in our expression of worship in our churches? And someone asked me, they said, okay, you're the token evangelist on the panel here. I'm interested to know what you think is kind of really important in in our corporate worship. So if you could only pick one way of worshiping God, when we gathered together, what would it be? And I was like, Well, first of all, thank goodness, we don't actually have to do that in



real life like we can, we can be diverse. And we should lament anytime that our worship becomes too restrictive and to just like one size fits all and be creative and diverse. But for the sake of the question that you've asked if I had to pick one, I think it would be testimony like just inviting people to come up on an open mic. Yes, it might be awkward. Yes, it might be messy and weird from time to time. But just people come up and share what God is actually doing in their lives that week, and how God has been at work through their evangelism through, through their need their prayer requests. And, you know, we're so thankful that it's amazing songwriters all over the world writing songs for the church. But also it would be brilliant to think that sometimes that we weren't just speaking out other people's words, that we were actually speaking out words from our stories that God has planted in us-

Lizzie Burke 17:42

Yes.

Ben Jack 17:42

To encourage, in our context, as well.

Lizzie Burke 17:45

Yes!

Ben Jack 17:45

It would be so powerful.

Lizzie Burke 17:46

Yes, totally. You know, and I think sometimes we hear pastors say that, you know, well, we have staff in our staff meeting, share the Gospel conversations they've been having. And we thought, well, that's amazing, because the culture of your staff is changing. But that doesn't always trickle down right to the church. And you know, there are other ways if you if you are a pastor listening, and you think there is no way I would ever put a mic up there and have people come up, you know, willy nilly share stories. Okay, that's totally fine. That aside, there are other ways to share stories more frequently. But don't just have it once a year, twice a year for baptisms. Don't just have it in your staff meetings, yes to both of those. But act, like what are other creative ways? So, Ben, what are other ways we hear pastors say, yeah, we celebrate, you know, evangelism, but maybe it's not as regularly as, as we're trying to encourage In this episode?

Ben Jack 18:36

I guess through, like missionaries from that have been sent from the church or associated to the church in some way, perhaps that missionary comes back for a visit. And they begin to give stories of what's been happening out of the mission field again, praise God, that's amazing. And so, so encouraging, and of course, gives the church lots of opportunity to pray for the missionary to support them financially, and all those wonderful things that go along with that, that relationship and that partnership. But again, those times can be quite few and far between. And also, they can feel quite removed from the ordinary life. Well, that's the missionary and they're in a completely different, you know, they're doing all this wonderful aid work in a particular third world nation, alongside their evangelism. And it can be this kind



of separation between our daily life and what the missionary is up to. So I don't think that always serves the purpose as fully as maybe we would like it to.

Lizzie Burke 19:26

Yeah, definitely. And like you said, it's like, oh, it's the professional person in ministry, like we talked about in an episode where evangelism is not best done by the pastor or the extrovert or the missionary, but it's really for all of us. And, you know, another way I think that we say we're regularly sharing stories of evangelism in our churches, is that we have new members of our church share their testimony, maybe during a membership class. And, and that's wonderful, but I think that truncates celebrating evangelism to a person's conversion story. rather than seeing opportunities for Gospel conversations in the day to day, it's not just I grew up in a Christian home, I accepted Christ when I was four, and I, and now I'm here. What are other stories of God working in your life? Yeah, more frequently. What? When are you stepping out and taking a risk? And having a conversation with a colleague about Jesus? Like, these are also the stories that we want to hear more frequently? Not just that climactic conversion story?

Ben Jack 20:26

Absolutely. I think there's two really important points to make to kind of go alongside what we're talking about here. And the first is that I would want to be disparaging over any of the things that we've talked about. They are all wonderful, good things, if you're talking about salvation in your staff, team meetings. Fantastic, keep going. But how is that trickling down? Like you were saying, if new members classes are running, and we're hearing testimonies and those wonderful, but again, how is that being filtered out to the rest of the body? So this is not kind of like a disparagement of what is already happening, I think it's a recognition that sometimes we become overly comfortable with those things, doing a bigger job than then, then they actually are in reality. And then not necessarily exposing to the church to one salvation fruit stories, which is the second thing I was going to go on to say that, that it has to be both of these things, one salvation fruit stories, but two also, like you said, Lizzie, stories of people going out and having a go with the Gospel. And then the stories that come back from that, the good, the bad, and the ugly, but yes, we learn often as much from the ugly, if not more, as we do from the success. Yeah. And there's a little irony, which I don't know if you've ever felt this way. But sometimes, like I said, you hear the success story. And it can be a bit discouraging, because you're like, Oh, yeah, but I see why that worked for you. But I'm just not.

Lizzie Burke 21:44

And if you're saying that Ben, like as an evangelist, me over here, I'm like, okay, well, then it's justified, that I'm feeling discouraged. Because if he's feeling discouraged, okay, we're all in this together, you know, so we need we need all the stories, so, and it just reminds me of this kind of image that, hey, if you're drinking water, we were always telling people drink more water, drink more water, it's good for you, right? And so you need a certain amount of water to stay alive. So if at some, you know, if you're in a church and like, yeah, occasionally we do the baptisms once a year, okay, you're drinking a cup of water, that's great, you're gonna survive, but what would it take to flourish? What would it take to run you got to drink a lot of water. So just keep telling stories. We're just advocating for more, more and more.



Ben Jack 22:23

Yes.

Lizzie Burke 22:24

So Ben, you got to sit down with Rachel Jordan-Wolf. Of course, we're in COVID-19. So it was over zoom, I'm assuming, but I'm excited to hear this conversation. Tell me about Rachel.

Ben Jack 22:32

Rachel is amazing. She was kind of appointed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Church of England over here for for some years as his kind of head of evangelism on behalf the Church of England. And she now works for an incredible mission organization in the UK called Hope, which seeks to stir the church across the United Kingdom across denominations to be hope, in the UK, and and they do all sorts of amazing initiatives. And so Rachel has got loads of experience as an evangelist as someone who is rooted in a local church himself, but also his blessing other churches, and has a fantastic resource called Talking Jesus, which you can check out talkingjesus.org, which I think she references in this interview, if I remember rightly, and she had loads of good stuff to say, when I sat down with her recently.

Lizzie Burke 23:19

Great, let's take a listen.

Ben Jack 23:21

So Rachel, in your experience of working with numerous churches, and through your insights of the talking Jesus research, perhaps in particular, do you think we actually give enough time in our church gatherings to celebrate evangelistic fruit?

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 23:36

Great question, Ben. And in fact, there's some really interesting things in that unpack before you even answer the question. And the first one is evangelistic fruit. And I think that's partly where this whole if you like, this whole question stems from what is evangelistic fruit? Well, obviously, it's really obvious when someone comes to faith, yes, mighty celebration, we can capture that story as a church, we're ecstatic. And we're likely to have a baptism all of that's really obvious. And we see that it is, of course, the ultimate evangelistic fruit. But as we know, from our research, and as we know, from experience with lots of people, if you think about how lots of people come to faith, there are very many, many moments along the way, which bring us if you'd like to the ultimate moment when people have stepped from darkness into light. And we can celebrate the church and have a baptism. And what often happens is we don't see or celebrate the steps on the way and we're not there. When people are having amazing conversations. I always talk about the fact that my mother used to go to Morrison's at the same time every week, when we could go to Morrison's and go to the same checkout so that she could talk to somebody there. She had many conversations with that woman, that woman got to know all about her because it took a long time for her shopping to go through. And when I when that woman had a crisis, it was my mother that she turned to she was able to say I'll pray for you. She was able to pull



out of her bag her Bible reading notes, give those to her, and the woman love them. And next week, so can I have some more now that woman has never made it all the way along the journey. So we've never had a big celebration of what happened in Morrison's supermarket on a Monday afternoon. And actually, I only know because that's my mother. And in the average church, we would never know that story. We never hear it, it just would never come up. And there would be my mother and lots of other people like her doing this amazing having amazing evangelistic impact and fruit in people's lives. But you're right, we wouldn't hear it. So I think we have got to get creative about how we, how we work with this and how we hear what's actually happening. And also what we actually think is evangelistic fruit.

Ben Jack 25:46

So do you think that's part of the reason? Because I think that's a brilliant observation you make about just just defining slightly what we mean by evangelistic fruit and the steps along the way, as we know, evangelism is rarely, if ever, an event, it's a journey. And steps along the way are so important, and the way that different people in the congregation can play perhaps a different part of the process along the way. And so if they hear those different steps happening, they might be encouraged about what's going on and think, Oh, yeah, I could play that role. Do, do you think part of the problem is that people don't have clearly defined understanding what we mean what we're talking about, and therefore things, certain parts of it get sidelined?

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 26:20

Yes, I think that's completely true. And because we've always celebrating the end, and we've not even understood the big piece in the middle, then then people don't know that what they've been doing is really important. And so you know, we found in the research, if you're not brought up in a Christian family, the next most important thing is that you have a Christian friend in your life, and a conversation with them is, is crucial. So we need to celebrate every conversation, whether it's whether it leads to something positive or not, even if that person walks away, Jesus talked to people and some people walked away. But the joy of the Gospels is that we have all those we have all these amazing stories, and narratives of where Jesus interacted with normal people in everyday life. What would it look like, if you like, if we rewrote, this is a good one, we could rewrite the Gospels, if you like of the good news of the church today. That would be an amazing book. And we'd all love it. And some of those you'd have to have at the person walked away at the end, like the rich young ruler, because they had too much wealth, and they didn't want to give it up. And others like the woman at the well, who ran back and told her city it would have it would have that end. But wouldn't it be interesting to capture more of that, and to know about it. And so one of the simple things we've done in our midweek group, and it reminded me because we haven't done it very much in lockdown is when we did the Talking Jesus Course, one of the things was to talk about the times that you talked about your faith. And we kept this as a pattern. And so we would just stop and have a pause and say to people, what's happened this week, what God's stories have you got from this week, and they'd be amazing. They'd be when someone took their car in for an mot. They ended up talking to all the garrriage mechanics. And they're basically fascinating, or someone at school, how they had a, you know, just a great chat in the staff room over a cup of coffee, the numerous times we as Christians are asked to pray, or we offer prayer. And all these things are an incredibly cumulative. The story of the good news of the church taking the good news out today, we do need better ways to capture if you like the whole of our evangelistic fruit.



Ben Jack 28:32

Do you think there's any other reasons why we might be failing to kind of engage with good story sharing around around this particular area?

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 28:40

Well, if you think about it, also, it's where do we hear people's voices? Whose voices doing here? And where do we hear them. So in an average church setting, you hear actually a selection, a selection, of a few voices. And so this might be something that does have to function. If it was a large church, maybe you can't make sure it functions in every midweek. And you might be asking every midweek group or every house group to collect the best stories that could then be shared across the church. Interesting question, what is the best story that in itself is loaded. And so it's been really fascinating, cuz we've had, we've had like, sometimes we'll get reports from off talking, Jesus calls people like that guy, is amazing that this person know that they're a dog walker, and they just had loads of opportunities to talk a Jesus cause to talk to people who are the dog walkers. We'd never had known that, the person who was doing it didn't know it. And I wonder if anyone outside the course even in that church knows that that's happening. Does that make sense? So we all get really excited. That's amazing. And, and so where does that happen? And probably it would be great to have it in the framework of every time a small group got together. If you have that as part of what you do. So yes, we're going to pray. Yes, we're going to read the Bible. And yes, when it comes to evangelism, the one thing we're going to do share all those, stories as to what God has been doing in the lives of the people around us and how he has used us, from the small to the mighty is amazing because the small matters. And I think that's the big thing. The small really matters,

Ben Jack 30:14

Right? It does brilliant. And what you're talking about is intentionality is like just making it a point of intention. And I guess really, that kind of brings us full circle, we started off talking about do we really know, what we actually want to share about? Do we know what we mean by evangelistic for it? And once we understand what we're actually talking about why it's important, then it's like, oh, okay, now, now, we can think we should get intentional about this, because it has, it has a value that we didn't see before. You mentioned earlier about baptism as a time when we we shout about people's journey of faith, and that that kind of definitive, important step of baptism, and we get intentional about baptism, because we know its value, and we see its value. So I guess it's how do we help the church at large and individuals within it, to see the value of these things? And with With that in mind, I guess, one of the ways that maybe we could help people see the value is, is by seeing some of the benefits of putting this thing. And what what are some of the benefits that you see in in elevating these stories and being more intentional about them?

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 31:10

I think, and in the best practice that I've seen is a little bit, in average, weekly, that actually more people think to have a conversation. So it's the same as the talking Jesus calls. You know, you said that word intentional?



Ben Jack 31:21

Yeah.

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 31:22

And so the more intentional you get, the more intentional people become. And that sounds really crazy. And the more you talk about it, the more people will remember to talk about their faith. So start with anything when your intention, which kind of goes round in a loop, isn't it? So when you start talking about it, then other people go, Oh, yeah, no, actually, I could do that. Or-

Ben Jack 31:40

Right

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 31:41

because you know, I text I sent a text to my friend, because this has happened in their lives. Oh, yeah, I could do that. And so I think once you're intentional, and you start to talk about something, it helps other people to become intentional, and they start to read. And you know what that is, the simplicity of the Talking Jesus Course, is quite simple. We might go hey, we need a course about it. But really, what it does is just raise the bar of, Hey, we should be aware of this, we could talk about this, we could talk about how this is going in our lives, we could talk about talking. I mean, it's as simple as that we could talk about praying for people, we could talk about how we might share bits of our story of what God's done in our lives. And you realize as well, the penny drops that we can't wait for the professional. And that's a big thing. I know you're gonna look at that in a different podcast. But the most important thing around evangelism is that we all matter. We all matter. We all play a part. And the most successful evangelists in our church probably don't realize they're evangelists,

Ben Jack 31:41

Right.

Rachel Jordan-Wolf 31:48

So I look at one girl, and she's awesome. And that's because she's brought so many friends along to Alpha, some who have been baptized this Sunday. And I don't think she realizes that she's one of the most awesome evangelists I've ever met. And when you chat, she goes well I just keep asking, you know, she just keeps asking. And I was like, she knew that we need to capture her story. She said, Well, I just keep asking, people can say no, can't they? Just say, hey, do you wanna come along to church with me? And it's amazing what's happened around her and how many people have come through to faith just because she keeps asking, and she's just got that kind of like, look, you know, and she won't realize how brilliant she is. I was just thinking, you've made me think, when do we tell her story? Or the story of her friend, one of her friends who's getting baptized this Sunday? When do we tell her story alongside that story? Will there be a piece of her story in that? Because then everybody could be encouraged, you could be that person.

Lizzie Burke 33:34



And that conversation was so interesting. You know, after talking to Rachel, what are the things that are really sticking with you?

Ben Jack 33:41

Well, I think the main thing that sticks out for me there amongst a bunch of gold that she gave us was that we need to celebrate stories that are in progress. And not just the stories that have finished, but stories where the journey is still happening. And there's still a process ongoing and stuff because again, that just ties into what we've been talking about in this episode and what we talked about in the episode of evangelism not just being a single moment, and the more that we celebrate the ongoing stories, the ongoing journey, I think, the more it will encourage men and women of God to get involved in ongoing stories.

Lizzie Burke 34:14

Yes, that's amazing. Let's talk about what's the problem with people believing the myth that evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches. Why is it problematic to believe this myth? What's something that comes to mind then?

Ben Jack 34:28

Well, I mean, we've talked already in a lot about how it can disempower and kind of discourage people when they're not hearing these stories. And this all really ties into the heart of the fact that we're supposed to be a people who remember we're supposed to be a people who remember first and foremost, who God is, you know, the Jewish people, their kind of John 3:16 is actually Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" this is this is something that you know, an Orthodox Jew will recite a couple times daily as a creed as they liturgy, because they want to remember this fundamental reality, that they belong to God and God is one, there is only one God and he is, he is Yahweh. So right from the earliest pages of the Bible, and from the earliest engagement of God with his people, the call has been to remember who he is, because when we know who he is, and we remember who he is, we walk in step with him. The second, our eyes are turned elsewhere, we have a problem. And we see that in the Exodus Passover, you know, remember, remember what God did in terms of rescuing you, out of Egypt, and then having the Passover meal, so you never forget. And of course, we see through the biblical narrative that repeatedly people do forget. And whenever they forget God's goodness, and what God has done, it always leads to disaster. But we're not just remembering for our own sake. It's also remembering, and telling of the Lord's wonderful deeds, as it says in Psalm 105. So we want to tell the Lord's wonderful deeds to build up our own community, but also so that the rest of the world will know His wonderful deeds, we are to be a people who remember. And if we're not remembering God, and we're not remembering what God can do, is it any wonder that we then start to take our eye off the prize?

Lizzie Burke 36:12

Yes, you know, and you keep mentioning these amazing scripture passages. And the the idea of remembering is not just all throughout the Scripture, but it's also then declare, once you've remembered declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light, we are people who declare, as it says, In First Peter two, but it's true, we often forget, that's the problem. We think that



evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches, but all throughout the biblical narrative, and all throughout, at least my life, the theme of forgetting, is really present. So we need to tell these stories, because I think we often forget that we are telling stories, in our communities, yeah, in our churches, and we don't realize how significant those stories do shape our community. And so I think just consciously reflecting, what's the main story we're telling, what are the main testimonies were telling, because they will be shaping what we value and how people behave?

Ben Jack 37:09

I think that might be one of the most profound things that gets said in this entire series of podcasts, Lizzie, what you've just said there, because we are not absent of story in our community. So the question is, what kind of stories are you going to tell? It kind of reminds me a little bit of like, like, people get a bit nervous about theology sometimes. And they're like, Oh, you know, do we need to bother with theology? Isn't that just a bit academic and a bit? I'm just an ordinary Christian, I don't need-my dad, who is a theologian always says, "You don't have an option". As a Christian or being a theologian. Every single Christian is a theologian, the second you're thinking about God, asking a question of God, reading the Bible, praying, you're doing theology. The only question is, will you be a good theologian or a bad theologian.

Lizzie Burke 37:50

Oh, yeah.

Ben Jack 37:51

And so our commitment then is to okay, I'm doing theology, the question is, will it will I do it well, or do it badly for the Glory of God? It's the same with the stories that we tell. We will never not tell stories in our communities, by the way that we live by the songs that we sing, by the sermons that we preach by the the way that we live, most crucially, in terms of the story that's being written in and through us by God's power. The only question is, will we tell good stories or bad ones? And, and I think there are stories in our churches, they're not bad personally, they're just indifferent. And when neglecting some of the best and most important stories that are coming out of our communities that would actually further the mission of God and what He wants to do in and through his church.

Lizzie Burke 38:27

Mm hmm. Yeah. And I think that's another problem. We don't know how to identify the stories we are telling or even tell our own testimony. I was recently on a little road trip with two of my best friends from high school, and we've been friends for over a decade. And I thought, you know, we just need to get away, we need to hang out. And one of my friends, she said, hey, let's tell our testimonies. And I thought, Well, that's a good response. I thought,

Ben Jack 38:50

Cool I said, 'cool' you were like, I don't want to do it!

Lizzie Burke 38:57



But isn't that the most Christian boring thing to do? Okay, this is very vulnerable here. I was like, we're on a weekend, let's just hang out, whatever. Anyways, she's like, I'll go first. And I'm thinking it's gonna be like, an hour and a half. You know, this is the minute I was born. This is what happened when I was two years old. But no, she told her story in 10 minutes. And I thought, Wow, that was powerful. You know, and she mentioned critical things like her parents divorce in the last five years and how that impacted her, how God shaped her and developed a heart of love her, and all these types of things. And I thought, you know what, I want to tell my story. So, the next morning, I said, hey, we're on a drive. I'll tell my story. I was the one who took 40 minutes, but I thought, you know what, I don't want to tell my story the way I usually do. I want to stretch myself to tell it from a different angle. I want to I want to press in and understand God, I know you're doing more in my life and you're even revealing how you've redeemed things in my past that I'm not even potentially aware of even now. So help me understand that Your salvation in my life as I tell my testimony from a different angle, and 40 minutes passed, and I was amazed at how encouraged I was about telling my testimony. But then how through the 'mhmh', and 'wow', and you know, those responses from my two friends, they were really encouraged to and I just thought, wow, what would it look like? You know, if you're listening to this, and you have like a rote memorized way of sharing your testimony, what would it look like to mix it up? and say, what if I started from age 12, instead of age zero? What if I started and told my testimony from this insecurity rather than the, you know, this kind of posture, I usually start. Mix it up. And I think that could really help us get excited about sharing our story, and also asking questions about other people's testimonies, too.

Ben Jack 40:49

For sure. Yeah, absolutely. asking people questions, helping people to like dig a bit deeper, and you're not necessarily just receiving it as they give it to you. Say Wow, that was really interesting. That bit there that you talked about, like, how did that make you feel? or How did you come to that realization and, and sometimes that can be really helpful for a person to go, you know, I've been telling this story for for 10 years, and no one's ever actually asked me that before. And so I've never really thought about it. But that's a really good thing. And suddenly, the story sharing becomes a dialogue. We're actually kind of inviting people into our story by helping us to get a greater understanding of our own story, even as we want them to understand it. And that's why we're sharing it with them. So yeah, I think it can be profoundly beautiful when we start to actually open up the dialogue, within our own story. But again, not necessarily just thinking of our story as being like, this is what happened 10 years ago when I came to faith, but what is going on in your life this week, you know, generally my default position is when someone says, tell me your testimony. The first thing that comes to mind, I guess, just because I've been thinking for many years now is what has God been doing in my life this week. That's where my mind goes straight away is like, Oh, yeah, tell me tell me a testimony. Okay. Well, yeah, what has God been doing in my life? And I want to tell them something recent, because I want them to see that, that this is not a historical event. It's a present reality.

Lizzie Burke 42:05

Yes, yes. And I kind of told myself years ago, I want to be a person with recent stories. What would that look like in your life, too? Okay, so where do we go from here? Ben? You know, we've we've talked about this idea that evangelism is regularly celebrated in churches, and many of us believe that, but



now we're realizing, oh, maybe we could share testimonies more often. And so for listeners, what's like the first step, as far as where to go from here?

Ben Jack 42:31

Well, I think if you're, if you're kind of in church leadership, I would say be honest about what's actually going on in your new congregation, like what-how are your services organized and planned? What space are you giving over? And? And has it become a bit rote? Have you just settled for like the baptism opportunity, the visiting missionary opportunity? Or are you actually creating genuine space for these precious stories? And again, just as a reminder, yes, number one, the stories of people who have come to faith and God is at work in their life in some way. And number two stories of people who are stepping out with the Gospel, and how did that go? Stories of people coming to faith, for sure, but also stories where it didn't necessarily go so great. But we can then invite the whole church to pray for that person that was spoken to and again, bring the church into the story and make them part of it. So be honest about what's actually going on at the moment.

Lizzie Burke 43:20

Yeah, you know, and through the interviews that I did with Portland area pastors, it was at that moment of honesty, where they realized where they could go from there. They said, Okay, this is where we're at. But this is where we want to go. So now that we've been honest, we know what step we can take next. You know, another piece of advice for where to go from here is just plan ahead. It's really simple. Just choose to block out a time during your Sunday gathering. It doesn't have to be long, you can, you know, two minutes during your announcement time or quickly, in between worship songs, tell a quick, current testimony. You know, one of the people you heard during these interviews on the episode, evangelism is supposed to be easy. Dr. Jerry root talked about how he created space in his small group time, he was like in his 20s. And he said, You know what, we're just praying for somebody, grandma's elbow and my neighbor's cat. I want to pray for people who are lost people who don't know Jesus. And so he just said, I'm going to be sharing testimonies of how I'm reaching out to this guy, Bob. And over time, you know, over a few weeks, he said, hey, to a small group, hey, pray for Bob. I'm gonna have a conversation with him this week, pray for Bob. I had the conversation. Now I want to go deeper. And then the next week, hey, here's Bob meet Bob. He came to Christ this week, you know, so he just invited his small group into sharing current testimonies as he was living one out and sharing his faith with Bob and I just thought, hey, that's really practical during your small group, even during the simple prayer time, which every small group has, what would it look like for you to share a story of somebody you're sharing your faith with?

Ben Jack 44:58

Yeah, absolutely. And if you are Not in kind of church leadership, you don't have any kind of control over the program and the service running order, help your pastor in your leadership team to plan ahead by going to them in advance and saying, Look, I'm often engaged in talking to people about my faith, and this, that and the other. And I sometimes have good stories to tell, would there ever be an opportunity for me to, to share that, like, I could record a 32nd video on my iPhone, he could play it. Or I could, you know, if you can give me 30 seconds on the microphone or something, but help your



leadership team to plan ahead by offering them in advance that content for which we're asking them to plan for.

Lizzie Burke 45:38

That's really helpful. You know, and if you're doing a serve-day, even one thing that we've seen a lot of pastors kind of assume is that as their people are serving the community raking leaves or filling backpacks for schools, that Gospel conversations will automatically happen. But we realize that's an assumption. It's not necessarily true. But if you train your people and say, hey, maybe the serve day isn't the best time to have a gospel conversation, if God opens the door, great, but if not, that's okay. What the serve-day is a great opportunity for is to build a relationship and say, hey, would you want to come to a barbecue? And then maybe at that barbecue, you can get to know more of their story. But what would it look like just to help change the perspective of your people before a serve-day and say, hey, gospel conversations may happen if they don't use this time to build relationship and see what happens from there.

Ben Jack 46:28

I think sometimes the pressure that can come after a discussion like this is that people are like, yes, I want to do this, but they, they feel the pressure to almost radically reinvent the whole thing. throw the baby out with the bathwater, start again with a blank canvas and like, okay, now, we're going to have a 90 minute service. And it's just going to be people telling their stories. And it's like, no, don't worry, it doesn't have to be a complete reinvention. Probably one of the best bits of advice we could give here is to say just start small. It doesn't have to be a complete revolution. Just start small. How could you leverage time? For example, during your normal notices, period? How could you leverage time between two singing two songs back to back? Is there a 32nd window for someone to quickly jump up and just offer a quick story, within that start small and see how you go.

Lizzie Burke 47:12

Yeah, and it just be consistent, start small, be consistent, more than annually. We've said at least every 30 days. And you know, we just want to share a few really simple practical ideas we've seen churches implement even this year. So there was a church called Reality LA, in California, and they started these Jesus changed my life videos for Easter. And they just train their people to share their story, you know, 30 seconds, 90 seconds on Instagram, or Facebook, on Easter of 2020. And so on Easter that whole week, they were just inundated with all these Jesus changed my life videos. And I thought, Wow, that's a really simple, great way to see Oh, my friends are sharing their story, too.

Ben Jack 47:55

Yeah, and I know that producer Kaedyn in particular is very fond of that I am second videos, they had a big impact for her and, you know, walk with Jesus in the early days. And I'm not surprised because there are videos of people sitting in a chair saying, look, this is how Jesus changed my life. I am second He is first, it wasn't always the way. And that testimony of whether it's a sports star, or a rock star, or all sorts of different types of people telling their story. God is at work. Still today, still changing people's lives, still saving people. And they're beautifully done. And so again, just another example of if you're not necessarily sensing the stories present in your community, there's plenty of stories out there that



you can get, show them and see how that then inspires those stories from within your community in the long run.

Lizzie Burke 48:39

Definitely, you know, and a final just piece of just practical advice is, again, if you're in a staff meeting, or you're at a faith based nonprofit, or even just with your small group or family start the conversation by saying, Hey, does anybody have any current Gospel conversations they want to share about just to encourage to inspire, could be simple talking to the person at the grocery store, or, or sharing with somebody on a bus, but just keep sharing those stories. And you'll be amazed over time, just being honest, being consistent, starting small, this will start to change the culture as you share testimonies regularly.

Ben Jack 49:13

Absolutely. And do it with transparency and invite people to to reveal their weakness. And, you know, if, if we're not able to do that within the church, then then there's probably something wrong, but within the safety in the community, of our family, of our church community, to invite people and say, look, step up, tell us how you been getting on, did it not go very well? Don't worry about it. Like, just share what happened. And let's pray for that person that you spoke to, if it's a story of you reaching out to somebody, you know. Let's get involved in that process together and hear those stories and like leaders take the initiative on that, that we're not just presenting ourselves as the perfect. I'm the evangelist, whenever I talk to somebody they always get saved Lord, if only that was true, I would be delighted. But, but actually, maybe that's got more to do with my ego at times, I don't know. I want it to be all about the kingdom of God. And ultimately, I don't want people to come to faith so that I can be like, yes, I'm a brilliant evangelist, want people to come to faith so that they know their Creator and inherit the kingdom. And when that doesn't happen in a conversation, guess what? It's not the end of the story. The story carries on as the people of God choose to invite God into the situation by getting together as a family, affirming the person who stepped out and powerfully asking God to get involved in that situation, even as we are not physically involved in it anymore. by praying and saying, God, will you now work in that person's life and that kind of story sharing is not just about telling a story. It's about being the story.

Kaedyn Lashway 50:41

Hey, this is Kaedyn Lashway. From the City Gospel Movements team, we created discussion questions for each episode for personal reflection, or to use as a small group. You can download this guide for free at evangelismmyths.com or click the link in the episode description.

Kevin Palau 50:59

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Lizzie Burke 51:18



We'd like to give a special thanks to the Luis Palau Association team to Joy Bongiorno for producing this episode. Kevin Palau for your radio voice intro Stephanie Wieber You're the boss. No literally, Spencer Reed for listening to hours of interviews and being a Google Doc ninja and Kaedyn Lashway for running the show and telling us what sounds good and what doesn't. From the Message Trust. Shout out to Peter Thompson for responding to emails quicker than Ben Jack and for not getting fired. And finally, this series would have not happened without our interviewees, Charlie, Jonathan, Caitlin, Paul, Christine, Jim, Rob, Marissa, Lydia, Manny, Sally and Bruce. Thank you.

