

The Great Commission

Glory International Church

19th January 2020

by

Eddie Vassallo

As I was praying on what to share with you this morning it became a genuine burden to me to bring a word of encouragement as well as a challenge to all of us.

Perhaps you do not know this, I consider myself a reluctant preacher, because of the serious responsibility that comes with preaching of the Word. I need to make sure that the topic I choose to share, I am living it out myself, otherwise I am a fake. God is exalted by truth that is manifested in the preachers life.

Introduction Illustration.

For many years Sonja and I would fly to South Africa and stay with her mum. Her mum always showed us amazing kindness and truly enjoyed having us around. One evening she invited both Sonja and I to watch a DVD with her. I read the synopsis of the film and it turned out to be a science fiction film. Now I am not fond of science fiction, but because my mother-in-law was keen to see this film, we agreed to watch it with her. The film is called **Deja Vu**, starring **Denzel Washington**. Please allow me to share with you a short synopsis of the film which has an important message to my sermon.

The film is about a police station with amazing technology. Using a computer they are able to review crimes and on a giant screen rewind the time by 4 days before the crime, so they are able to visit the scene and prevent the crime from happening.

In this film, the crime was a man who placed a bomb on a ferry that killed hundreds of people.

As the police were rewinding the events Denzel Washington recognises a woman that he was very keen on when he was a young man.

So he says to the police captain can I go back in time and warn her and try and prevent this crime from being committed.

It was interesting what the captain says to him, “ **call it a faith thing but I don’t think we should interfere with Gods plan for these people.**”

Denzel replied, “ **Do you not think, that God would be pleased if we rescue some of these people.**”

Anyway they agreed that he should go back 4 days before the crime was committed.

He goes to this woman 's apartment 4 days before her ferry trip to warn her of the impending danger. The woman remembered her visitor and invited him to her apartment. And after reminiscing about the past for a short time. And this is what he says to her: “**If you knew something so incredible and is very hard to believe, something that could save your life, would you tell it?**”

The woman paused and replied: “Yes you should tell it.”

As I reflected on this statement I became so aware as to how important it is to share the Gospel that is so incredible, that it has the power to save people's lives.

The response to the Gospel will determine where people will spend eternity.

I would like to share from Matthew 28 :16 a passage familiar to most of you, known as a The Great Commission.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “ All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

We live in an age where what was once considered good is now called evil and what once labelled as evil is now considered good. Men and women have abandoned their moral compass to satisfy their carnal nature.

We have become a nation that has forgotten how to blush.

Yet we look around us and observe an increasing interest in the things of supernatural. Our TV programmes continue to promote the supernatural, programmes of dark nature and witchcraft is considered the accepted norm. There exists in our world an unhealthy interest in the things of the occult.

Having said that, every day I come across people who are looking for hope, who are looking for a purpose for their lives.

And with all the compassion and love in my heart, I tell them that God loves them and his plan for them and it is for good , to give them a hope

and a future. **The amazing love of God is still found in the Cross of Christ. It is at the cross that God gave us his best of all creation.**

Since I gave my life to the Lord, I have made it my ambition to make the message of Salvation known to people.

For the last 10 years I have been serving as a Community Chaplain for Baptist Care.

I look after men and women in Boarding houses and people on the verge of homelessness. Most of these people struggle with mental health issues and substance abuse.

Some years ago my manager invited me to take on a new project to go into a social housing estate. When I shared with work colleagues that I have been invited to this particular facility, they all said; " You must be crazy, I wouldn't go there." More than one person said this to me. I started to get concerned as to what I have agreed to. So I took it to the Lord in prayer and started to pray like this;

"Lord, I don't know , why you chose me to go to this place, but I am so glad that you chose me."

So on my first visit to this housing estate, I parked in the driveway and proceeded to look around to familiarise myself with the property.

I saw a tradesman working next to one of the back of the units. So I said "good day to him:"

But somehow the person inside the flat assumed that I was talking to him. He started shouting at me: "Who are you, what do you want, get out of here."

Calmly I said ; "I am Eddie the Chaplain from Baptist Care I am here to visit the residents."

The man behind the fly screen shouted;" We don't want you here go away, F...off."

I sensed the Holy Spirit say to me: "Stand still".

So I paused for a moment before responding to this man's abuse.

I said to the person, "how are you coping mate?"

The man replied; " I am not, I can't get my phone to work. Do you know anything about phones ?"

I said ;"Perhaps , I can look at it for you."

The man invited me inside. I looked at a man who was shaking like a leaf looking very ill.

He said to me; " I need to sit down." and placed an oxygen mask on his face and closed his eyes.

A minute or so later he said:" my land line is not working, I need to ring my nurse but my phone is dead.

So using my mobile phone , I rang Telstra and asked to speak to a team leader and informed him of the urgency of having a technician to come and assist this very sick man.Telstra assured me that they will have a technician at the flat early first thing in the morning. I related this information to the man sitting in front of me.

The man introduced himself as Jim and than started to apologise for his behaviour.

I said: "No offense taken."

Jim then went on to tell me that he has terminal cancer and his doctor more or less gave him 3 months to live. I gave him space to talk for a little while longer, not interrupting him as he shared with me painful memories of his past.

When he had finished speaking, I said to him, "I am going to say something to you that you need to listen to me. You said you have been given three months to live, have you made peace with God?"

He replied: "No, I haven't, but I really want to. How do I do that?"

I shared the Gospel with him and the need for him to repent as he listened with uninterrupted attention.

I said to him "God is now wanting a response from you, what would you like to do??"

I led him to repent and pray for God to forgive him for living a rebellious life.

At the conclusion of his prayer, we both could sense a divine presence of God.

Jim looked at me and said: "Thanks mate, can I give you some money to buy me a Bible."

I said: "I will get you a Bible, put your money away."

I said I have been given the job to come here on Tuesdays and Fridays can I come to visit you, if so, which day suits you?

He said can you please come on Tuesday and Fridays.

I kept seeing Jim for 9 months reading the Bible with him and sharing about God's love for the world.

I was with Jim at the nursing home the day he died.

You see, if you know something really incredible that could save someone 's life would you share it? Eddie is asking...

Regrets

The American University of Cornell did a community research in their area asking them "What are some of your regrets"

After surveying university employees, students, retired professors and nursing home residents they were shocked to discover that twice as many people were bothered more by what they DID NOT DO rather than the things they had done.

Missed opportunities were the most common regrets.

Most regrets were from those who were unwilling to take a chance.

They feared too much the short-term consequences that failure would bring.

Have you ever been in a situation, perhaps at work or a non-christian friend who has come to you and you sensed that the Lord wanted you to share about the love that God has for that person. Somehow you sensed the Holy Spirit prompting you to say:

" hey friend, I sense your pain, know that you are not alone God cares for you. Can I share with you what the Lord has done in my life."

As the years go by I find the current church becoming more silent when it comes to evangelism, people are more reluctant to share their faith. Yet in our western culture we still have the liberty to share our faith unlike Pastors and Christians in China who are imprisoned for their faith. There are over a 160 million Christians in China despite the brutal persecution that occurs daily.

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The most common reason I find people do not share the Gospel with others is fear. **Fear of rejection and ridicule.**

But **Proverbs 29 :25** tells us:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

Throughout the whole Bible, God is saying do not be afraid for I am with you.

I read recently the acronym for FEAR is:

False Evidence Appearing Real.

The same author says that ; “fear attracts Satan just like faith attracts God.”

And I truly get it, sometimes, when our work colleges know we are Christians, they ridicule and mock us as if we are some sort of freaks. Not only that but they exclude us from certain functions and even call us bigots because we trust the Bible for our daily life.

BUT.. we need to remember what the Lord says in **Luke 6:22**

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of man ! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven;

If we say we are born again than we must conclude that we have died to self and are living for Him who calls us to be a witness for Him. If we who are created in His image which is love than love needs to be our motivator. For many years, Christians pray for the gifts of healing, prophecy , preaching etc. But as I get older the only gift I pray for is,"Lord show me how to love people, I want to love them as you love them ." Sometimes out of the gift of love, other giftings seem to flow from that.

Before I leave the house in the morning, I ask God to give me a divine appointment, someone I can share Christ's love with.

Guess what - He always does. Than the responsibility rests with my obedience.

Sometimes the person who comes to us has a physical need, let us not make the mistake and just give them the gospel, if at all possible offer help. Otherwise we have just given them our theology and have sent them

a way with their needs unmet. Jesus always met peoples physical needs first, be it hunger or healing. If people come to you sick, offer a prayer of faith lay hands on them and pray in Jesus name I evict you sickness.

Same when my wife and I go out, we ask , “Lord bring someone in our path to tell them about Jesus.” When talking to people listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying, sometimes He may give you a word of Knowledge for that person.

Ephesians 3:20 says:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.

Notice the verse says HIS POWER....

I was asked to visit a sick man in his home a man that his neighbours were very concerned about. I knocked on the door, and I heard a voice say; "come in, it's open. " The man inside was crouched on the floor, looked up at me as he moved on all fours on the lounge room floor. I sat on a foot stool as he narrated his story to me. He explained to me that he has a neurological disease, that restrict his movement. He shared with me how he came to Australia from Mauritius and how his health has declined over the years. He shared with me about his broken marriage and about his son who is a drug dealer. As I listened to his story, there was a moment's silence. It was here, I felt the Lord saying to me; " ask him about the pact that he made with the devil."

I felt very awkward and I said to God,

" No, I am not going to ask him that."

I heard the same statement twice.

At the end, I said to the man , "I am learning to hear from God, is, it possible that at one point in your life, you made a pact with the devil?"

The man looked at me with absolute horror on his face and said.

"How on earth did you know this, I have never shared this ever with anyone in my life." He told me how jealous he was of his brother who was a successful business man and his life was full of trouble and pain.

I shared God's love for him that is in Christ Jesus and this man repented and gave his life to the Lord.

Then I asked him; " is there something inside you that it should not be there?"

He said, "Yes my pain moves along my spine, my legs and my hands."

I said to him, "this sounds like you have a demon, would you like me to cast it out."

he agreed, I assisted him to his feet, placed my hand on him and commanded the demon to come out. I asked him if there was a change, he said NO. I rebuked this demon again, nothing happened.

Then I got really angry and with authority, I commanded this demonic spirit to leave him. he jumped up a few inches of the floor, straightened up and started to walk on his legs. I was more surprised than he was , so I tested him and made him walk with me from Annandale to Newtown.

If you knew something truly amazing, something that would save somebody's life would you share it?

Eddie is asking you...

Too often we tend to lean on our own reasoning when it comes to sharing the Gospel rather than trusting in the Lord.

Proverbs 3:5-7

Tells us to ;Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight. Be not wise in your own eyes.

Even the disciples when they were with Jesus committed this error. But the Lord proved to them that His ways are higher than theirs.

Let me share some examples with you:

Come with me to **Luke 9:10-17**

Luke 9:10-17 (NIV)

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, **11** but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside

and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.”

13 He replied, “You give them something to eat.”

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They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish— unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.” **14** (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” **15** The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. **16** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. **17** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

As Jesus was teaching the multitude, the disciples could for -see impending disaster. Evening was approaching and there was no food. The twelve disciples got together to discuss their options.

They could have said something like:

Peter: Can we afford to buy food for this crowd, there is a few thousand of them?

Judas; Not a chance, the treasury is empty.

John; Maybe there are people who brought food with them !

Andrew: No, I checked. There is just one boy with a few loaves and fishes.

After reviewing all their options and perhaps considering what other popular leaders were doing to feed their crowds and reviewing the latest literature on the subject, the disciples developed the best possible plan: **Send the people away.**

What if Jesus responded to them by saying: “ Well as a matter of fact, I was intended to do something else. But you worked so hard on your plan. You are asking me in unity, believing in faith I can grant your

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request. So perhaps I will do as you have asked and send the multitude home in an orderly, dignified manner.”

How do suppose the disciples would have felt ? They would have been elated with their “success” Having lent on their own understanding,they would have achieved their goal. **It is possible to follow our own reasoning and totally miss God's will for our situation.**

Luke 9 is filled with similar events (vv 52-56) Read.

Luke 9:52-56 (NIV)

52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; **53** but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. **54** When the disciples **James** and **John** saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them[a]?”**55** But Jesus turned and rebuked them. **56** Then he and his disciples went to another village.

When the disciples encountered a rude reception from the villagers, how did **James** and **John** respond?

They asked Jesus if they could call fire on their insolent heads!

What were these overzealous Sons of Thunder thinking ? Perhaps this reveals racism on the brothers' part, for the Jewish people and the Samaritans had a mutually contemptuous relationship. Here was an opportunity to destroy an entire community of Samaritans!

We note that these guys James and John never suggested such a dramatic response to the Pharisees, even after Jesus called them children of Devil (**John 8:44**)

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The brothers may had good motives. Perhaps they saw this as an opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate his power so that , in sacrificing one village, many others would come to believe. **Once again it could be they were leaning on their own understanding.** Whatever their reason, Jesus rebuked them. **Once again their best thinking was completely out of line with the Father's plan.**

Acts 8:14-17 provides an interesting conclusion to this event:

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. **15** When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, **16** because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

One can only imagine what went through **John's** mind as he entered Samaria this time. Perhaps he came across the village he and James previously intended to destroy. **But this time, rather than sending a deadly fire, the Holy Spirit filled the Samaritan believers.**

What a contrast. Human wisdom for that place would have brought total destruction.

God's plan produced joyful deliverance. Instead of death the villagers received eternal life. There is perhaps no more graphic biblical depiction of the contrast between people's best thinking and God's way than in this account.

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You know it is easy to criticise the disciples for their perhaps judgmental attitude towards the Samaritans.

But we too, can have a similar attitude towards other people who are different to us and at times we think that they don't deserve God's love but only His judgement. I know I have been guilty of that myself. Please allow me to share with you.

FARUK

I remember one morning waking up not having slept much going to work I had to take a client to the city by train to the Dental Hospital at Central. After a few hours waiting and allowing the dentist to examine my friend we were ready to go home .

I felt totally exhausted and longed to get some sleep. My friend suggested for us to get aTaxi to his place as he too felt very tired from the dental procedure.

So as we stepped on the foot path I hail a Cab. This Taxi came charging

overtaking a bus and braked in-front of us missing us by a few inches.

I was not impressed with this guy.

Our driver was a Muslim guy dressed in his national gear wearing a full beard. The driver spoke in broken English but was able to make himself understood. I thought to myself I could now perhaps close my eyes and trust this guy will get us to our destination.

My attempt to rest was soon disrupted as we approached George street cross the road was a young man covered tattoos. Our driver burst into a fit

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of rage saying; "Look at that, that is disgraceful, people in Australia have no respect for God."

He asked my opinion on the topic to which I replied:

"People want to be Lord of their lives and chose to ignore God. Little do they know there is freedom in surrendering your life to God."

He repeated what I said: " Freedom in surrendering to God... I like."

I asked him where he was from and his name.

He said, he was from Afghanistan and his name is Faruk.

I asked him what his name meant?

And repeatedly punching the steering wheel

Our driver started to punch the steering wheel, then He said my name means JUSTICE.

I waited a few seconds before responding

To this I replied;" do you apply the same justice to yourself as you do to others."

Faruk than said;"well I do big sins and little sins and I go to the Mosque on Friday but I still feel the same."

At this point I did not want to carry on the conversation but I sensed the Lord saying to me, "your attitude is wrong Eddie,""I LOVE THE FARUKS OF THIS WORLD AND I DIED FOR THE FARUKS OF THIS WORLD."

I sensed a spirit of repentance coming over me, as I was grieved in my heart because of my attitude.

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So I said to Faruk the reason you go home from the Mosque feeling no change is because only Jesus Christ can forgive your sins. Jesus took your sins and mine on Himself so we can have peace with God the Father."

There was an awkward silence as Faruk digested what I just said.

I thought , is this it Lord, is this guy going to ram this cab into a bus.

Than out of the blue he said: What is your profession?"

I said,"I am a Chaplain."

He said; "What is that?"

I said " a Chaplain is like a priest."

I was shocked by his reaction....

"Oh please sir, you must pray for me. My wife and I have been married for ten years and we can not have a baby."

By this time we had arrived at our destination.

I asked Faruk, if he ever came across any Christians?

He said ;"Yes even in Afghanistan, he had Christian friends and he also

have believers here in Australia." I asked him if he had a Bible at home to which he replied that he did.

So I said to him : "can I pray for you.?"

Faruk bowed his head I I prayed in Jesus name.

There was a lovely presence of God in the taxi, Faruk sensed God for the first time and thanked me profusely.

I asked him when he goes home to read the Bible the Gospel of Mark with

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His wife and encouraged him to pray to ask Jesus to reveal Him self to Him.

Faruk said: "YES, Yes I will."

My friend and I paid our fare as Faruk drove in his usual chaotic manner tooting his horn and waving out the window.

As we walked away from the curb my friend said to me: "Mr Eddie, I thought this guy was going to kill us. I was OK with you talking about God with him, but when you started talking to him about Jesus, I became very nervous."

I said to my friend, I truly believe that God loves all people and His kindness that leads them to repentance. And at times that kindness needs to flow through his people.

You see, if you know something really amazing that could change somebody's life, would you share it?

Eddie is asking...

What I am trying to say is this, we do not give up, even if people seem very different to us. Never assume that the Gospel message does not apply to them . It is not for us to decide. Often the immigrants that come to Australia are more open to the Gospel.

Yes there are people here who oppose the message of the Bible but there is a reason for that.

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I like what **Ravi Zacharias** says this about them .

"A man rejects God neither because of intellectual demands nor because of the scarcity of evidence. A man rejects God because of a moral resistance that refuses to admit his need for God."

2 Corinthians 6:18

Informs us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ not counting men's sins against them. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

What an amazing privilege we have been given, that the creator of the heavens and the earth chooses to use US ordinary people to bring others to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ .

Often I come across people of other religions, like **Buddhists, Muslims**

and **New Agers.**

Many claim that they are perusing God through these religions, but one thing for certain they do lack understanding that Christianity is not about being religious, they do not know that it is about people being in a loving relationship with the Father through Christ.

What I like to emphasis is this when discussing faith issues, **we do not go around pulling down other peoples' belief systems.** Because all that does it creates barriers.

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But what we do focus on is Jesus's life and His ministry.

We talk about the way Jesus lived.

He had compassion on people.

He fed those who are hungry, we know that he fed thousands of people.

He healed all the sick and those oppressed by the devil.

He raised people from the dead

He was the only person to live a sinless life.

He died an innocent death on the cross, so that we can be reconciled to the Father.

He rose from the dead.

And finally He is coming back to judge the living and the dead. The bible says every knee will bow to Jesus and call him Lord.

Briefly if we examine other religious gurus be it Buddha or Mohamed.

While they had some interesting sayings they did not extend themselves to relieve people from their suffering.

We look at how they died:

Buddha died from food poisoning, a mushroom soup prepared by his assistant.

Mohamed died in his sleep.

All these religious gurus are still dead.

And we can say to our listeners, when it comes to choosing a guru, one would be very wise to choose one that is alive.

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So Hallelujah, JESUS is alive.

And He is coming back.

What Jesus is saying to us.

“Open your eyes and look at the fields ! They are ripe for the harvest.”

We are the workers that God wants to use to bring the Gospel to a people who are perishing.

We need to get away from the idea that being a Christian is simply praying the sinners prayer , read the Bible and go to church on a Sunday and hear a person talk and then wait it out for another week and do the same thing.

Our saviour has called us to GO,

NOT SIT comfortably in a church. The role of the church is to equip

the Saints to carry out the Great Commission.

Your family, your neighbour, your workmates, how are they to know who God is. We have all been called to make disciples.

The Apostle Paul reinforces the great Commission by these words:

Romans 10:14-15 (NIV)

14 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? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

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Brothers and sisters at the end of our lives we do not want to have regrets at the things that we did not do.

If you know something really amazing that can save someone's life, would you share it?

The Lord is asking you...