

Next STEPS Week 6 – Sharing

This week is the sixth and final week of our series called Next Steps, and we think of this as next steps to a better you.

As Christians we are called to be followers of Jesus. That's called Discipleship. Discipleship is about adding value to our lives and the lives of others by following Jesus.

Discipleship is also a journey. And just like every journey this one is made up of steps. And that's what this series is all about: the simple steps of discipleship.

Being successful disciples involves these simple steps. They're not easy, but they are entirely simple.

Now each of these steps represents a life style choice, choices that we think are essential to growing in a relationship with Christ, a relationship in which he can change and transform us.

So, in the course of this series we're taking a look at each step along the way. As we've already noted the steps we are talking about are not obligations. As soon as we look at them as some sort of obligation, we weaken their effectiveness. And they are not just more things to do. None of us needs more things to do. The steps we're talking about are aimed at simplifying not complicating our lives.

STEPS is an acronym

"S" - is about service in a ministry or a missionary-type service. Jesus called himself a servant and that is what we are also called to be.

"T" - is about tithing and giving. God is generous and we can use our money to become more like him.

"E" - is engage which is all about small groups. We were made to be in relationships and be in community with others. So faith sharing in small groups is very important.

"P" - is the practice of prayer and the celebration of the sacraments.

"S" - is about sharing our faith.

Sharing our faith is what we're talking about today.

To understand this step, we're going to be looking at a verse from today's Gospel of Mark.

As we've said earlier in this series, the followers of Jesus assumed that he would become a great earthly king who would throw off the yolk of Roman oppression.

In Mark chapter 10 we hear today how James and John wanted to sit at the seats of power next to Jesus in this new kingdom. And of course, when the other apostles heard about this, they were angry and jealous. They probably all wanted those positions of power.

So Jesus takes this situation and turns it into a teaching moment for his apostles.

Mark tells us...

⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them,

“You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers, lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.

⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.

Mark 10: 42-44

These are very challenging words but Jesus tells us this because.....

⁴⁵ the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many.”

Mark 10: 45

Jesus called himself “The Son of Man” a title he used to imply his mission. And here he explains what that mission is. The whole reason he came among us, was not to be served, but to serve. To serve, and to be...

a ransom for many.”

Mark 10: 45

In ancient times, a ransom referred to a debt. If you were in debt to someone, and you couldn't pay off that debt, then you would become their servant and work it off, unless someone else stepped in and paid the debt for you. And that was called a ransom.

Jesus came to pay the ransom for humanity's sin. We have all been born in sin, and being born in sin does not make us bad people; it makes us slaves to sin.

- It means that even though there is good we want to do, we don't necessarily do it.
- It means that even though there are bad things we want to avoid, we don't always avoid them.

Sin is the reason why we are judgmental of others. Sin is the reason why we don't always do what's in our best interest. Sin is why we hurt the people we love the most.

We have all let God down. We have been ungrateful for his gifts. There are times when we turned our backs on God, and we continue to do so in our brokenness. Sin can be so pervasive in our lives that it becomes a form of enslavement.

The payment for our sinfulness and disobedience is the ransom that Christ on the cross, has paid for us, totally out of love. It's not a ransom that we've earned, or that we will ever earn. We are saved, not on our own merits but simply because we are loved by God.

Dear friends, this is the Good News, the greatest news of all, the greatest news ever!!

- Good news that we don't have to be slaves to sin
- Good news that even when we fail, there's another chance and a fresh start waiting for us.
- Good news that we don't have to be perfect for God to love us
- He loves us right now, today, just as we are, even while calling us to live better lives

So, if you have good news, what do you do with it? You share it, right?? Like....

- The woman who finds out she's going to have a baby
- The couple who become engaged
- The candidate who gets the big job
- The student who aces the test

Those are not things we keep to ourselves. Good news has got to be shared.

But sharing the message of the Gospel can seem challenging, even daunting. Many of us who grew up Catholic, were not taught how to share this Good News with others. So it may seem very foreign to some of us to do so.

In order to share our faith with others, we need a good strategy. And the strategy for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is simple.

It's called: **Invest and Invite**

Invest in the people you know, people in your family, your neighborhood, parents from your children's school, or soccer team, people who do not have a relationship with Christ and his Church or who have walked away from that relationship for whatever reason.

Invest in them relationally, conversationally, prayerfully. When they struggle, tell them you'll keep them in your prayers, and then pray for them.

Ask the Lord to help you help them. And He will do this! All we have to do is trust in His power to make that happen.

And, when the opportunity arises, invite them to church. Offer to take them to church, or to meet them here. Promise them breakfast or coffee and cookies afterwards.

And for our part, as a caring congregation, we will all promise and pledge to partner with you, putting time and effort into making sure your guest has a great experience.

Our greeters, café ministers, all our students and children's ministers can all partner together to create an environment that aims at communicating good news.

And the rest of us can:

Smile and greet guests and those we don't know before mass.

Give up our coveted seats at optimal times like Christmas and Easter. We can sit in the hall and let the visitors have the best seats. We can introduce ourselves to a stranger after mass.

People have told me how they came as a stranger to this parish and stayed, because of a smile, a kind word, a welcoming atmosphere.

This is all part of our journey of discipleship, of being transformed by God. Every time you become a-better-version-of-yourself in your service to others, the effect of your transformation extends to your family, friends, business, school, neighborhood, church, marriage, nation, and beyond. If you get better at discipleship, then the world gets better too.

A better you, and thus, a better world, begins with the first STEPS that you take, following the Lord on the path of greatness in the direction of discipleship. A little bit more today than yesterday. A little bit more tomorrow than today. And in the process, discovering a more successful and meaningful way to live our lives.

Discover ways to start your next STEPS by using the kiosks in the narthex or our website at gslakeshore.com. Let's all strive for a better US!