

## **Eight Good Habits - 8. Talk Openly about Spiritual Things**

Preached: 10/31/2021, Germantown;

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**Scripture**

**John 3:1-13**

**Message:                   Talk Openly about Spiritual Things**

We are in a series of sermon studies on the subject of **Habits**. A few months ago, I came across an article on ChurchLeaders.com, written by Neal Samudre. The title of the article is: **8 Habits of Christians Who Live Out Their Faith Every Day, Not Just on Sunday.**

**Habit; NOUN**

1. a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up.

Samudre is concerned that too often we push our faith to the margins of our life.

***“[we] let the things that matter drown in our flooded schedules. This is what has happened to many of us. We’ve let our faith become a Sunday thing, not a 24/7 thing.”***

Samudre identifies some practices that will help us to live out our faith everyday. He identifies 8 practices to develop into habits. As these practices become habits, living them out will come automatically to us. They will become settled practices that are hard to give up. We won't have to think about it. We will just do it. They will be a part of our nature as much as the color of our hair or some other feature that is uniquely ours. These habits will transform our Christian Witness.

So far have talked about seven practices that we are trying to turn into habits. So we have come to the end of this study. We'll review the entire list at the end of the sermon today

Today, we are considering the habit of talking about spiritual things. ***People who live out their faith are in the habit of talking about spirituality.***

Samudre writes: ***And finally, all these people I know talk about their faith openly. Today we can be concerned about offending someone or making them feel uncomfortable, but really that's our fear speaking louder than our love. We talk about the things we truly love, and if we're too scared to speak about our faith with those around us, we'll never let it surface in our daily lives.***

As I have read Samudre's words over and over again this week as I've prepared for this message my response has covered a variety of emotions. His words are very forceful and convicting. Am I supposed to feel guilty for not being better at talking about my faith? Am I supposed to feel shame? Am I supposed to question my salvation because talking with others about spirituality is something that does not come easy for me? How am I supposed to respond? I don't think it is Samudre's intent to make us feel guilt or shame. I think he is presenting this as a challenge. As Samudre is writing about this subject of living out our faith every day, and not being just a "Sunday Christian" he is **challenging us to be intentional about incorporating these practices to our life.** He is challenging us to grow to a point where these **practices become habits.** Talking with others about their faith and our faith may not be something that comes easy for us. It's not one of our habits. His challenge is to begin to be intentional about following these practices until they become habits. Become intentional about talking about faith until it becomes a habit.

Again we have the example of Jesus to study and follow. Jesus was very good at moving his conversations with others into the realm of Spirituality to get people to think about their relationship with God. In the passage that I read earlier from John 3 Jesus encounters a man by the name of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish ruling council. That body was made up of two groups – Pharisees and Sadducees. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. As a group that was responsible for providing leadership to the people in the area of faith and spirituality, the Council had become aware of this prophet/teacher named Jesus and the influence He was having on the people of the land. While some of the Pharisees were abusive toward the people,

putting burdens on them that they could not bear, many of the Pharisees were sincere in their devotion to God and the Scriptures. Nicodemus seems to be genuinely interested in learning more about Jesus. He comes to Jesus by night to talk with him. Some have speculated that Nicodemus comes at night because he did not want to be “found out”. He was afraid what his friends may think. But actually Pharisees often reserved the evenings to thinking about spiritual matters and talking with others. He begins the conversation wanting to talk about what Jesus had been doing – miraculous signs. But Jesus discerns that there is something more important going on in Nicodemus’ heart. So Jesus’ answer to Nicodemus seems rather strange in light of what Nicodemus said. ***“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless He is born again.”*** That doesn’t seem to have anything to do with what Nicodemus wanted to talk about. Jesus’ question is intended to get Nicodemus to think about his relationship with God. That may have been the concern of Nicodemus’ heart. **How can I be right with God?** Jesus tells him If you want to be aligned with God, you must experience a new birth. This comment by Jesus arouses Nicodemus’ curiosity. He does not understand what Jesus is talking about. Jesus explains that someone who wants to be aligned with God must experience a spiritual change. They must be internally transformed by the power of God’s Spirit and become a new person.

So Jesus starts where Nicodemus is and moves him to think about what he must do to become a part of what God is doing in the world. The **challenge for us is to learn how to move our conversations with others to spirituality.** How to get people to talk about their faith That should become our passion. **Rose Meeder** writes that this work of **“sharing our faith” is incredibly hard.** But we must recognize the importance of it. She says: ***“I believe that meeting Jesus on this side of heaven will make life righter and more joyful and more peaceful than anything else available to us. There is a tenacity and fierceness to God’s love through Jesus that holds people firmer in the face of life’s struggles than anyone can imagine.”*** I imagine that many of us have discovered that for ourselves. **Having a relationship with God is incredibly important and beneficial.** And if we have experienced that, and if we are people who want to practice kindness toward others then we will want others to experience this same richness. SO we must learn how to talk about spiritual things.

Meeder offers some suggestions of things we need to keep in mind when we are trying to talk to others about faith and spirituality:

1. **MOVE PAST YOUR ASSUMPTIONS** – Don’t make assumptions about what others believe about God or Jesus. Listen to them first to get to know them.
2. **EXPRESS AND GENUINE INTEREST** - Ask how they are doing. Find out as much as you can about them, their lives, their interests. Convince them that you care about them. By listening to them, we affirm that they are someone who has worth and value.
3. **KNOW YOUR TRUTH** - Know what you believe about faith, about belief about following Christ, before you engage in conversation with someone else. Spend time reading the Scriptures and other books so you can understand what you believe
4. **SHARE YOUR STUFF** – Don’t be reluctant to share that you are not perfect. Let them know you don’t have all the answers
5. **LET GO** - Don’t be pushy for an immediate decision. It is the work of the Holy Spirit – not you – to bring conviction. In the case of Nicodemus, it does not appear that he made a decision following that first conversation with Jesus. That does not happen until later.

Rick Richardson in his book Reimagining Evangelism says that we are **“Travel Guides”, not traveling sales people.** When being a Christ follower is the most important element of our identity, faith will come out naturally.

I encourage you to develop the habit of talking about faith and spirituality. Ask questions to get others to open up about what they believe.

**CONCLUSIONS:** So, we have come to the end of our list of 8 habits to develop as we follow Jesus. These habits will result in living out our faith every day, and not just on Sunday. Let’s review the list once again:

1. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of having “Restorative Times” built into their days.

2. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of serving others or demonstrating love as a reflex. They don't have to schedule "Loving or serving". It is automatic.
3. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of considering character over other outcomes (personal gain)
4. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of cultivating community with others.
5. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of honoring the roles God has given them
6. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of seeing the significance of "small" moments
7. People who live out their faith every day have developed the habit of facing suffering in godly ways
8. People who live out their faith every day are in the habit of talking with others about faith and spirituality.

Don't be a "Sunday only Christian" Become a 24-7 Christian.