

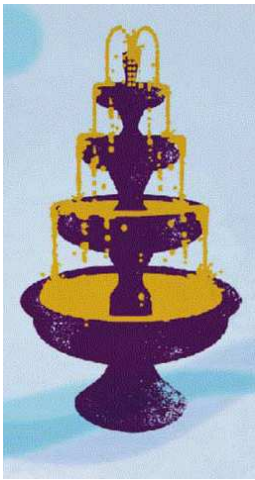
You Love, I Do!

Bethany UMC – Jan 31, 2010
(Outflow Series – Family and Friends)

Scripture: John 4:47-53

by Ingrid Wang

Key Verse: John 4:53 *"Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed."*



Welcome to the third week of “Outflow” sermon series. For those of you may be visiting with us, this sermon series is about exploring what it means that ***God intends for our life to overflow with unimaginable joy and power.*** The overall theme and road map of this sermon and study series is from Acts 1:8 when Jesus told his disciples, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” We are invited to imagine God’s love flows like a four-tiered fountain. The top tier of the fountain represents Jerusalem: a personal relationship with God. The second tier of the fountain represents Judea: relationships with family and friends. The third tier represents Samaria: the community around us, especially people who don’t look, believe, or act as we do. The fourth tier and the base of the fountain represent the ultimate destination: the ends of the earth.

In the first week, we are reminded that Jesus came into the world so that we might have a life “full to overflowing” and how the Samaritan woman received the living water Jesus gives. This living water becomes a spring of water gushing to eternal life. Last week, we have heard the importance of establishing personal relationship with God so that God’s amazing love may flow into and fill our hearts. This week, we will be examining as we are constantly being filled up with God’s love through our relationship with God, this love will flow outward toward others. The natural first place for this to happen is in relationships with families and friends. There are many biblical examples of entire households coming to Jesus. The Scriptures we heard this morning is one of them.

A royal official and a loving father whose son was gravely ill came to Jesus and begged him to go to his home and heal his dying son. Jesus told him, “Go back home. Your son will live!” I don’t know about you, I have never experienced any doctor who can heal in distance by proclaiming healing not to mention reviving life of a dying person. More interestingly, this father believed what Jesus said and started going home. He never doubted or questioned Jesus’ healing power. While the man was on his way, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was alive and well. When the father realized that his son was healed at the very moment Jesus said that he would live, he and his entire household believed in Jesus. (John 4: 50-53) What a powerful story it is!! If this man doubted or even hesitated to believe in Jesus, I don’t think the impact on his entire family would be the same.

One of my uncles has been a faithful Christian for many years, but not his family. For many years, my uncle actively served his church as a photographer, a mentor for young people, tour guide for newcomers and different roles in many other ministries. My aunt on the other hand, would go as far as cooking meals for my uncle's church friends, but not go to church despite the fact that she had been invited countless times. However, my uncle never gave up the hope and he continued to pray for her. A few years ago, my uncle fell from the stairs and bumped his head on the rails. A few days after the incident, he developed a severe head ache. The doctor discovered a big blood clot in his head that needed to be removed immediately. At age 77 then, this type of surgery was considered a huge risk. My aunt was so scared that she felt paralyzed. Their Christian friends formed a 24 hours nonstop prayer vigil for my uncle throughout the surgery and recovery time. One lady from church spent the night with my aunt to comfort her. After witnessing the love of God through these Christians friends and the healing power of Jesus, my aunt was deeply moved and finally gave her life to Christ. Never give up hope for those who are in your household and have not yet believed in Christ! Keep praying for them!!

Another biblical example is the story of Paul and Silas' experience with the Roman jailer. Paul and Silas were stripped and flogged before they were locked up in prison because they were casting out evil spirit and bring new life to people. However, the iron bars could not



lock up their faith. Even though Paul and Silas were badly hurt physically and emotionally, they continued to pray and sing praises to God. And then, there came the massive earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. All the prison doors were open and the iron chains were dropping off their wrists and ankles. Our minds are refreshed by the most recent earthquake in Haiti. Similar situation happened to the local prison and all the prisoners ran away. However, that was not the case for Paul and Silas. Not only they stayed, they prevented the Jailer's attempted suicide. As God's intervention became clear to him, the Jailer fell to the

ground and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." (Acts 16:31) We never know when and how God works in people's heart. However, I firmly believe if we continue to pour out our love to family and friends, when the right time comes, our entire household will be saved.

I am sure most of us want to and have tried to share the gospel of Jesus with our families and friends as a result of the out pouring Christ's love to us, but getting through to them is not always easy. Unfortunately, those who are close to us don't usually fall on their faces before us and ask, "What must I do to be saved?" And at times, we may feel like we are running into walls of resistance. I know I have. Some of my friends have suffered bad experiences with obnoxious religious people in the past so they don't want anything to do with religion. It only takes one bad apple to ruin the whole basket. Others resist because they are caught up in lifestyles or beliefs that make it hard for them to respond positively to Christ's teachings. Remember the rich young man walked away from Jesus because he did not want to sell all his possessions? In a culture that is heavily pursuing materialism, it is difficult for people to give up the luxuries they own for the sake of Christ. I don't like pushy sales person when

shopping. I am easily turned off whenever that happens. I want to make my own decision when I am ready. Therefore, I can totally understand that there may be people resisting the gospel simply because our approach might have made them feel too pushy. I don't know about you, but I have certainly felt beat up from my past attempts to talk to my family and friends about Jesus. What can we do to get through to our loved ones without making them feel rude, pushy, or obnoxious? After all, it is the gospel we are trying to proclaim and we want our loved ones to experience God's amazing love.

We can certainly learn from Paul and Silas. After all, they were literally bruised and beaten and their opportunities to get through with the gospel had ended. What prevented Paul and Silas from feeling guilty or depressed as they sat in the dark cell? What moved them to continue to pray and sing praises to God? I think one possibility is that they had a realistic view of what they could not do. Same thing applies to us, whenever we feel defeated, one of the most helpful things we can do is to get real about what we *cannot* do. Admit it,

1. We *can't* undo the past

Whatever has been done is done. We can't change it. If we remain in the thoughts, "If only I had said this or if only I had done that," we will never be able to by pass moaning and complaining and to move on to what we can do. Focus on the main thing: love your families and friends so that they may also experience what you experienced.

2. We *can't* control the future

We cannot control what others will think, feel, or do. Worrying about what might happen in the future will not help us embrace God's vision for us, our family, or our friends. Paul and Silas certainly did not waste their time on wondering "what if we never get out of the jail?" or "what if they beat us again?" Instead, they focus on prayer and praise and put their trust in God's hands.

3. We *can't* make anyone believe

Just as those pushy sales persons can't make me buy anything, we can't make anyone believe. It is not ours, but God's job. Paul reminded us in 1 Corinthians, "I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow." (1 Cor 3:6) Our job is simply to sow the seeds by telling our story and sharing God's love. Only God can water, nurture, and make the seeds grow into plants.

If we are clear about what we *can't* do and let go of our worries, we might as well move on with what we *can* do.

1. We *can* pray

My uncle never ceased praying for his wife and his prayer was answered. Not only had his wife given her life to Jesus, their entire household is living a new life in Christ. Prayer is the most powerful and the best thing you can do for your loved ones.

2. We *can* listen and love

Our willingness to listen and to love will open more spiritual doors than any television evangelist or best selling Christian books ever could. Listening to what people have to say with respect makes them feel understood and they are much more likely to respond positively when we do speak. There are very few things more spiritually powerful than the feeling of acceptance that comes from being heard.

3. We *can* share and serve

Sharing does not mean you have to prepare a scripted gospel Power Point presentation. Sharing simply means be genuine and transparent about what is happening in you spiritually. If you have recently seen God answer a prayer, by all means, share the excitement! Even when you are struggling with certain Scriptures or theological concept, be honest about your feelings and admit your limited understanding, yet reassure your trust in God. Being transparent makes us real and more convincing to others. Serving to and sharing with are like peanut butter and jelly; they go together perfectly. Serving wholeheartedly to our loved ones will strengthen our credibility. As we get serious about reaching our families and friends, we also need to be prepared to see God move!

Often, God will show up through people and providential occurrences. Paul and Silas definitely did not expect the prison doors open and iron chains fell off, but they grabbed the opportunity and played a part in transforming the Roman Jailer's life. Neither did my uncle imagine the impact his head surgery brings to his wife. However, God showed up through the caring and nurturing of some faithful Christians and my uncle's entire household is now a part of the body of Christ. We never know when and how God works in people's heart. We simply need to listen to what God is saying, "You love, I do!"

Remember, there are two things God seldom does: everything at once and nothing at all. Sometimes we see the result, other times we don't. Nevertheless, we can count on that God wants His love to flow out from our hearts to families and friends. There are many ministries at Bethany provide opportunities for us to serve in such way. One of them is our 'Friends at Home' ministry. I would like to call Jim Watkins to come forward and share with us his involvement in this ministry.

Interview...

You may or may not be ready to serve in such a ministry at this time in your life. However, you can all pray and do acts of kindness for your families and friends by letting them know that you love them. Each of you was given a card with a piece of 'life saver' candy on it when you enter the sanctuary this morning. Please give it to someone in your household or among your friends and thank them for being who they are! Listen to God's voice, "You love, I do!" May God bless you and your loved ones! Amen.

