

“What’s in Your Pocket?”

Scripture: Philemon 6

Graphic: PTL

Key Verse: ⁶ I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

Ask them to: Share their faith everyday...

1) Introduction

- a) How many of you would be more apt to share your faith, if you know exactly what to do, it was easy, and you didn’t have to be afraid? Great, because we will all be trained this morning, and it could change your life plus the lives of others.
- b) How many of you have ever been on a cruise ship? Two people, Mike and Martha, were going to Europe. They decided to make the trip extra special and take a cruise over to Europe. They had been saving money for several years for this trip. The ticket on the cruise was more expensive then they had hoped for so they decided to save some money by smuggling food on board. They brought on crackers, peanut butter and cheese. While everyone else was upstairs enjoying the good food in the dining areas, the great recreation, and the exciting entertainment, this couple stayed in their cabin, eating their cheese and crackers.
- c) After several days they started to get "cabin fever", becoming cranky and hungry. Finally on the last night Mike said, “We need to have at least one good meal before we get to Europe—let’s go to the dining room.” When they got to the dining room and the waiter handed Mike the menu, he noticed it had no prices on it. Mike asked the waiter, “Waiter, how come there are no prices on our menus?” The waiter replied, “Where have you been?” Mike said, “Never mind, how much would these two steaks cost, along with these two salads?” The waiter replied, “Didn’t you know that when you bought your ticket in New York, that it came with all the meals?”
- d) We all may get a chuckle out of this story, but we do the very same thing!
- e) As the story illustrates, Christ paid the price for each of us as Christians, 2000 years ago on the cross. God wants to bless us abundantly as His children. Many people accept Christ as Lord and Savior, but don’t allow the Holy Spirit to work completely through them and sanctify and bless them

because they are not obedient to all of God's commandments. I've heard it said that God wants to bless us more than we want to be blessed!

- f) The first point on your outline asks the question, "Are we **missing** some of God's **greatest blessings**?" Are we like the couple on this cruise ship, who have accepted Christ, yet are not being blessed abundantly?

2) The Barriers

- a) Let's go right to scripture and point out two important verses that highlight this point. The first verse is John 14:21 which says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." Now let's look at Luke 6:46 where Jesus says, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I say?" None of us wants our Lord to say that to us! One of the ways we can demonstrate our love for, and the lordship of, Jesus Christ in our life is by obeying the commission He gave each of us in Acts 1:8. In that passage, Jesus states, "But 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."
- b) The last verse I want to point to which really brings this the blessings God wants to give us, is Philemon 6 where the apostle Paul says, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."
- c) Are we failing to receive some of God's great blessings that we are already entitled to because we are not being obedient to all that God has commanded by not fulfilling his commission to share our faith?
- d) The second point on our outline asks, "What's keeping us from **sharing** our **faith**?"
- e) As Christians, we are members of the largest army in the world—the Army of God. According to our commander, we are told in Luke 19:10 that the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost. If God sent His Son Jesus to seek the lost, it must be very important. That should tell us something about our commander's priorities for us. The question we have to ask ourselves is -- Are we in the active army or are we in the reserves? The problem is, too many of us are in the reserves! When we are active, we become sharper and more easily used by God. When we are inactive, we become rusty, lethargic and unusable.

- f) There are many reasons why we don't share our faith, and I am going to talk about a few of the reasons that paralyze us the most often.
- g) We are going to have some fun right now. In just a minute, I'm going to pretend I had a heart attack and fall on the ground and I've only got 5 minutes to live. In this drill, I am unsaved. All right, now I'm going to pick someone from the front row who wants to come up and in front of everyone share the gospel message with me. Let me look around for a volunteer. Someone must have dropped some money on the ground because everyone's eyes are looking down. This illustrates the first and biggest reason we don't share our faith—because we are **afraid**.

h) WE ARE AFRAID

- i) Who is the greatest evangelist to ever live other than the Lord Jesus Christ? Probably the apostle Paul!
- ii) Well, a great encouragement to all of us should be Ephesians 6:19-20 when we see Paul pray that he would share the gospel without fear and that God would give him the words to speak. If Paul was nervous, and had to pray for God to help him overcome his fear, it's OK for me to be nervous too! We need to learn from Paul to pray for God's power, boldness and clarity!
- iii) Many times we look more at the risk, which is rejection and loss of friends. But what is the reward?
- iv) Please raise your hands if God has ever used you in leading someone to a saving faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. If God has never used you in this manner, please ask some of the people who have raised their hands about the great joy they were blessed with in watching someone have a second birth for eternity. I would venture to say that might be the second greatest time in our Christian walk -- right behind the time when we accepted Christ as our Savior! We are not to be proud of this, as God does the drawing of the person and He changes their heart. When a carpenter builds a house and steps back, it's he who is proud -- not the hammer!
- v) We may see a baby who's born physically who will live 50, 70 or 90 years, but that person will eventually have a physical death. When we see someone whose heart is truly changed by the Holy Spirit, we see a birth for eternity.

i) I'M NOT CAPABLE OR QUALIFIED. OR I'M ARE NOT SPIRITUALLY MATURE ENOUGH OR IT'S THE PASTOR'S JOB, NOT OURS.

- i) God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called. And has He's called each of us in Acts 1:8.
- ii) 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 says, "We are Christ's ambassadors as though God were making His appeal through us." Let me ask you two questions: If you were appointed the ambassador to Italy or Japan for the United States of America, would you be excited? Would you prepare for this position of responsibility? Would you study the language? How about the customs? If you are a Christian, you are the ambassador on this Earth for the creator of the universe.
- iii) In Matthew 4:19, Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Well, if we're not fishing, we're not following.
- iv) For those who say I'm young in my faith, let me ask a question. When does a candle start to burn? When it's first lit or after it's half way down? Remember, Helen Cadbury, the founder of The Pocket Testament League, was only 13 when she started the League.

j) WE LACK CONCERN, ARE SELF-CENTERED

- i) I'd like to ask each of you to write down the name of three friends or relatives that you know who do not know the saving grace of our Lord at this time. I'd like to read you a poem that someone gave me a couple of years ago that is very powerful. It tells of our responsibility to tell others about Jesus -- not to convince them -- only to tell them.

ii) My Friend

*My friend, I stand in judgment now,
And feel that you are to blame somehow.
On earth I walked with you day by day,
And never did you point the way.
You knew the Lord in truth and glory,
But never did you tell the story.
My knowledge then was very dim,
You could have led me safe to Him.
Though we lived together here on earth,
You never told me of the second birth.*

*And now I stand this day condemned,
Because you failed to mention Him.
You taught me many things, that's true,
I called you "friend", and trusted you.
But I learn now that it's too late,
And you could have kept me from this fate.
We walked by day and talked by night,
And yet you showed me not the light.
You let me live, and love, and die,
You knew I'd never live on high.
Yes, I called you friend in life,
And trusted you through joy and strife.
And yet, on coming to this dreadful end,
I cannot now call you "My Friend."*

- k) Make a commitment to share your faith with the people on your list. If they reject it, they are rejecting Christ, not you. We must deliver the message in a loving and gentle manner. We need to make sure we are not offensive but yet we must not shy away from telling the truth.

1) WE LACK ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

- i) Let me tell you a story about a couple, Mark and Cathy, who recently bought a new home. As so often happens, they sold their house and it closed on time, but their builder on the new house was three to four months behind schedule, so they ended up "homeless." They had to go out and rent an apartment for a few months. As you might imagine, most of their stuff was packed in boxes and put in the apartment. When they came home to the apartment at night, do you suppose they talked about how the living room furniture really didn't fit? Or they wanted to repaint the kitchen? Or put a skylight in the bathroom? No, their hearts were just a few miles away at their new house that was being completed.
- ii) Sure they would vacuum and clean the apartment because they had temporal concerns for it, but whenever possible they would go to the new house and talk about what type of tile they'd have in the entry, or how they would do the landscaping, etc. Does the apartment matter? For a while, but they know that eventually they are going to the new home where they will spend many years, maybe the rest of their lives. They don't get ulcers over the fact that their furniture doesn't fit in the apartment.

- iii) The problem is for so many of us that we are so concerned about the apartment that this life represents that we never focus on where we'll make our eternal home. We really won't be here that long. As someone once said, we'll be dead a lot longer than we'll be alive.
- iv) As Christians we are called to do many things -- worship, read our Bibles, pray, fellowship, share our faith and so on. We could make a long list of things God has called us to do. But if we all died and were with the Lord in heaven tonight we would do all of these things better there! There is really only one thing we can do better here on earth than what we'll be able to do in heaven and that is share our faith! Once we're with our Lord, sharing our faith will be irrelevant. We must do it now.

m) WE CAN'T SHARE A FAITH WE DON'T HAVE

- i) Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you—unless of course you fail the test."
- ii) This is something that each of us has to ask ourselves. Where do we stand in our faith? If we truly know and understand the grace of God's salvation, we're going to want to share the good news with others.
- iii) When we see a good movie, read a great book or eat in a new restaurant, do we tell people? Then shouldn't we share the most important thing that has ever happened in our lives? The free gift of eternal life.
- iv) We hear many other reasons people don't share their faith such as: "I don't have time" or "I don't have enough contacts" or "I forget, it's not part of my routine." Today we'll show you how using the Pocket Testament League gospels will negate all of these excuses.

3) Read. Carry. Share

- a) The third point on our outline asks, "How can The Pocket Testament League **help** me?" The answer is that the League will help you share your faith more **easily**, more **often** and more **effectively**.
- b) Let's first talk about the motto of The Pocket Testament League -- Read, Carry and Share.
- c) **Why Read God's Word?**

- i) I think most of you realize that the first step in sharing your faith is to learn how to love God. You just can't truly love God if you don't know Him. Reading is a great first step. The Bible gives us a clue here also. In Matthew 4:4 it says, "Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God." God is comparing the importance of reading God's Word to eating food.
- ii) Another verse which tells us why it's important to read God's Word is 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which tells us that "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." How many of you feel that it would make a worthy goal for your life to read some portion of God's Word every day? I know most of you are like me and that on days I read my Bible first thing in the morning, the day sure goes a lot better!

d) Why Carry God's Word?

- i) Why should we carry these Gospels of John in our pockets daily? They are free! And they aren't very heavy either!
- ii) The first reason is you can't give what you don't have in your pocket.
- iii) Having this small gospel in your pocket is a great reminder that if we're faithful, God will put people in front of us each day that need to hear the gospel message. That's the other reason! God sets up divine appointments for us -- especially when we are ready to be used and praying for the opportunity!

e) Why Share God's Word?

- i) Hopefully, the first part of my presentation has convinced you that we are commanded to share our faith. If we're still not convinced, take a look at Romans 1:16.
- ii) We're going to give you "Official Pocket Testament League" training now!
- iii) I'd like each of you all to stand. Pretend you are holding one of these Gospels in your right hand. Now extend it out and say to the person on your right, "Here, this is a gift for you." The left-handers always try and sit down now and say they weren't trained! So here you go left-handers!

Hold the Gospel in your left hand and turn to your left, extending your left arm out and say, "Here is a gift for you." You have just learned how to throw the seed of the Gospel message. (sit)

- f) Let me share just a few of the many ideas we here every day from people who use these little Gospels to spread God's word:
 - i) One young man budgets \$10 per month for his own evangelistic efforts. Twice a month as he goes through the drive-through at McDonalds or Tim Horton's he asks the lady at the window if anyone behind him has purchased \$5 or less of food. He then buys their meal and asks the counter person to give them the Gospel of John when they come through. By the way, he's written his name and phone number in the Gospel and well as his church's name and address. He also gives one to the person at the counter. Here's the great part -- 80% of the people he does this for call him to thank him! That gives him the opportunity to tell them about Jesus Christ and invite them to church. If they are Christians, he encourages them to become League members and get Gospels also!
 - ii) A 94-year old lady who lives in Pennsylvania who can't leave her house mails Gospels in return envelopes each time she pays an electric, gas, water, phone or mortgage payment.
 - iii) We have folks who keep a supply by their front door to give the people who drop off pizzas or other orders, the Fed Ex person, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. Whoever comes to the front door receives a Gospel.
 - iv) When you leave a tip for your waitress, how about putting it inside the Gospel of John. Waitresses always remind us not to be stingy. One couple that had never shared their faith decided they were going to do this. That night they went to dinner and after they had paid the bill and the waitress had gone to the back, they left her a Gospel and ran to their car! They were "high-fiving" each other, excited that God had used them. Just then the wife said to the husband, "Don't get too excited, because you left your cell phone in the restaurant!" When the husband went back in, the waitress was reading the Gospel. She looked up at him, with tears in her eyes, and said, "Thanks, this is what I needed."
- g) These are just a few ideas. I'm sure that you will think of many, many others. Most of us probably came to know Jesus Christ when a friend or someone we knew and respected shared their faith with us. These Gospels

come in very handy as we find ourselves in one-on-one situations with friends and relatives.

- h) After all, we know Isaiah 55:11 tells us God's Word does not come back void. We always forget the second half of that verse says that it will achieve the purpose for which it was sent! God sent it so that we would come to know Him!
- i) Each time we hand out one of these Gospels, we need to realize we may just be planting a seed or moving that person one step closer to faith. Sometimes we may get an opportunity to share the entire plan of salvation and have God use us as His instrument in that person's salvation. Other times you will give it to a Christian whose faith and commitment will be reaffirmed and energized. Many times you may give it to another Christian who will sign up as a member and then share their faith with many, many people you might never have known -- until you get to heaven! That's evangelistic leverage!
- j) It's important to understand that the ministry of the Pocket Testament League is focused on encouraging one-on-one evangelism. These gospels are not tracts. They are not to be passed out randomly or put under the windshield wipers of cars. Their highest and best use is to be carried in your pocket and when God brings someone into your life that needs to hear the Word of God, you've got it to give them. If we are praying for opportunities and carrying these Gospels, God will set up the divine appointments. We are aligning our hearts with His!
- k) Before we close in prayer, I want each person to take the membership card out and take 30 seconds to fill it out. Please remember that by filling this out, you are making it a goal to read His Word daily, to carry these Gospels with you, and to Share them with people he puts before you.
- l) Membership is free and the Gospels are free. Once you are members, you can re-order free Gospels by getting on the website or calling the PTL. Make sure you include your email address if you have one, as they will send you a short, encouraging monthly reminder. Just like someone who goes on a diet who has a trainer who reminds them of their goal, they will remind and encourage you to continue to share your faith.
- m) I want to leave you with one last story that hopefully will give you a sense of urgency about sharing your faith. At the end of a service one lady came up

and asked for seven English Gospels. The pastor called the following week and to tell what had happened.

- n) She gave them all out by Friday, giving the last one to her best friend, an Iranian Muslim lady that Friday morning. They talked for over an hour about Jesus Christ. The lady would not make a commitment but said she would take the Gospels home over the weekend and read it. That Sunday her friend was killed in a car accident. She never knew if she accepted Christ. She did not know she was glad she "didn't wait until Monday" to share with her friend, as Monday never came. Most of us, when challenged to share our faith with a friend, say "I'll wait until Monday -- or when the time is right" Well, Monday may never come. Please don't wait until Monday -- share your faith this week and from now on!
- o) Today we have determined that God has commanded us to share our faith and that most of us don't for various reasons. The League will help us share our faith more easily, more often, and more effectively.
- p) Let's pray.