How to more effectively bring the gospel to people who are different than ourselves
A visit with Brig Judy
June 3, 2018 – 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Turn in your Bibles to I Corinthians 9 – which was our scripture reading today. Today we are
going to try something a little different. Both Brig and I will be bringing the teaching today and
we are going to do it in an interview/question & answer format.

Introduce Brig Judy and ask ...

- How many years have we been supporting the ministry you & Chris are doing? (1983)
- What are your main responsibilities right now to evangelize and disciple?
- What is an encouraging discipleship story?

Our passage today encourages us how to be better witnesses for Jesus, especially with people
who think different than we do. How can we effectively share the good news about Jesus with
people who have a different worldview than we have? There are lots of people in our Central
Vermont area that do not have the same worldview that you have. Jesus gives us the wonderful
privilege to share the good news that God loves us so much that Jesus came to die on the cross
to pay the penalty of our sins and then Jesus rose bodily from the dead to prove He is the only
way to the Father. At the core, missionaries are people who have intentionally gone out to reach
people with the gospel who are different than them in some way – different culture, different
area, different customs, different language, etc. Missionaries develop wise insights into how to
effectively share the gospel to people who think different than we do. So Brig will be bringing
all of our illustrations today from what he has learned and observed as a Vermont who has
gone to Canada to share Jesus with Native Americans – or what he may refer to as “First Peo-
pies” because their ancestors were here before our ancestors.

PROPOSITION: Missionaries to other people groups have much wisdom to share on how to
more effectively bring the gospel to people who think different than we do.

I. We are called to be evangelical (sharers of Jesus’ good news)

Now we aren’t going to appreciate the insights here in the Bible or from missionaries if we
aren’t firmly convinced of the importance of every Christian sharing Jesus with others.

A. We want to win as many as possible to Jesus

READ v 19. We want to win as many people as possible so they can enjoy heaven in-
stead of being deceived to hell. All Christians have a role in this, not just clergy.
B. The gospel is good news which saves people

**READ v 22.** The gospel of Jesus is good news that “saves people”. That is, following Jesus rescues us from something that can overwhelm, destroy, cripple, crush or devastate us. How incredible is that that we have a message that is more powerful than a cure for cancer! We are helping people for eternity!

C. Sharing the gospel with others brings future blessings

**READ v 23.** When we share the gospel with other people it brings future blessings for eternity – we get to share in the blessings of the billions that will all be in heaven because someone else shared Jesus with them!

D. Crown: special honor & reward for eternity

**READ v 25.** In our day the crown would be an Olympic gold medal or the Stanley Cup for hockey or the Lombardy trophy in football. The crown was a physical symbol that represented special honor and achievement. When we put effort into sharing the gospel more effectively, we are earning special honor and reward for eternity!

Ask Brig – **So Brig tell us about your life. 35 years ago when you were young and idealistic, why did you want to give your life to bringing the good news of Jesus to Native Americans – or as they are called in Canada “First Peoples”. Has that changed at all? How has it deepened?**

As we read in our passage today, God encourages us that if we are going to be more effectively in sharing Jesus with others, then it really helps to understand the different customs and perspectives of those we are speaking to. If we go up to someone from Great Britain and say, “**Why do you drive on the wrong side of the road?**” they probably won’t consider deeply anything else we say. It isn’t the wrong side of the road, it is a **different side** of the road. If we are going to function well, we need to drive on their side of the road in England and they need to drive on our side of the road in America. Understanding differences is important!

Ask Brig – **Brig, share a way that Native Americans think different than Anglos which we might be tempted to think their way is ‘wrong’ when it is just different?**
II. This requires external and attitude changes to be most effective

A. Give up some personal freedom

I Corinthians 9:19

READ v 19. According to this verse, God expects Christians to give up some personal freedoms, or rights, to be more effective in sharing the good news of Jesus with others. "God inspired spiritual openings rarely come at a convenient time – we have to sacrifice doing something we want to share when God has opened a person’s heart. And we can’t just do what we want, when we want all the time and expect God to use us to make an eternal difference. There are freedoms and perspectives we are called to give up for a greater purpose.

Ask Brig – Brig, you have a fair amount of Vermont influence in your life as you moved here when you were in 9th grade and Chris is 100% Vermonter. What have you given up culturally from your Vermont upbringing that has helped the gospel be heard more clearly by those who grow up in a Native American culture?

B. Become like others when with them

I Corinthians 9:20-22

READ v 20-22. This is an interesting challenge here that we should become more like others when we are around them if we want to effectively witness for Jesus instead of making them become like us first. Missionaries go through a lot of effort to learn the heart language of people so they can share Jesus in that language. Hudson Taylor challenged the missionaries to dress & respect Chinese ways of doing things so Jesus’ words could be heard better. That is a great challenge for us, especially in leaving behind some of our judgmentalism of cultural things. But it also gives us a challenge.

Ask Brig – How can we be authentic yet also culturally sensitive. If I try too hard to be like someone else it is fake, but if I just do things in another culture or group the way I normally do them in my culture or group then I can come across as insensitive, condescending and like a bull in a China Shop. When I came out to Vermont 39 years ago, I learned very quickly that I could never be a Vermonter because I wasn’t born here – and they really got upset with anyone who tried – that’s so fake. Yet they clearly appreciated that I tried to do things a Vermont way – first learning to ask for “a soda” instead of “pop”. What has helped you learn to be culturally-sensitive to Native Americans, but then not becoming fake as if you were one.
C. Sensitive to cultural/social/economic differences

Also in v 20-22 there is this incredible sensitivity to cultural, social & economic differences – Paul knew the things that are important to the Jews, those under the law, those not under the law and the weak were. He had some sense of the different values and struggles each of these groups had.

Ask Brig – What helps you personally learn the differences between your way of thinking and theirs? And how do you distinguish between what simply shouldn’t be done ever and that which isn’t your preference but it is how they have chosen to live. For example, I understand from your comments in previous visits that the church doesn’t allow burning sweet grass in a funeral service because of its spiritual statement but the church does allow opening the casket at certain times and removing one’s eye glasses when approaching the casket which could be seen in light of false belief, but the actions themselves are more neutral.

III. This also requires personal self-discipline

The final section of v 24-27 speaks about the need for self-discipline in the Christian life – especially in this area of witnessing to others.

Ask Brig – What self-discipline have you instituted as a missionary so you will be a more effective witness for Jesus and where do you see others taking short-cuts which can lead to problems later.

(Neal add or reflect on some thoughts from the overall exchange)

Ask Brig – What final challenge or story do you have for us to help us as we witness to people different than ourselves but still keep the message of Jesus very clear.