



SERMON OUTLINE



INTRODUCTION

"Every contact leaves a trace."

Edmond Locard was one of the pioneers of forensic science. His quote is known as the 'exchange principle'. It holds that the perpetrator of a crime will bring something into the crime scene and leave with something from it, and that both can be used as forensic evidence. Every interaction leaves some kind of material trace.

As Christians, we may have 100s of interactions each day and we have the opportunity to leave a trace of love, hope and joy! Think through the interactions you have had in the last week...

...with the neighbour ...the work colleague ...the shop assistant ...the post man ...the family member ...the barista ...the bus driver ...the bank clerk ...the person next to you in the queue...

What kind of trace did you leave?

We can sometimes be so focused on what we are doing that we miss the many opportunities that every day offers to share something of Jesus - in our words and our actions.

Today we are going to explore 'prompts'.

Prompts are simply things that 'inspire or incite an action'.

In the book of Acts, the story of the early church, the disciples were prompted to share about Christ in a whole range of ways and we are going to look at three stories and see how God may prompt us in the day to day of life to share more of who he is....

PROMPTS IN THE EVERYDAY

Re-tell the story from Acts 3:1-10

Context

Its shortly after Pentecost and Peter and John are going about their life, praying at the Temple, when they are interrupted. It's possible that Jesus had passed this beggar weeks earlier.

Acts 3:6

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Preaching points

- Peter and John are interrupted. They don't go looking for the man but he asks them for help. What are the interruptions that we often ignore? The homeless person selling the big issue? The noisy young people who interrupt the tranquility? How might we see these interruptions through God's eyes?
- Peter and John had no cash but they knew they had something to offer. We often see needs around us that we are unable to meet but we still have something to offer - a word of acknowledgement, a smile, a prayer or a coffee. Peter and John boldly offer healing. Are we ever prompted to step out an pray for a miracle? How might we be prompted to reach out to those who interrupt us?

Challenge

Will we ask God to prompt us this week to see some of the interruptions we encounter as being opportunities?

PROMPTS IN THE QUESTIONS

Re-tell the story from Acts 8:26-40.

Context

Philip was one of the seven appointed deacons appointed by the disciples to help distribute resources. He has been ministering in Samaria and is then led by an angel to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza.

Acts 8:30

'Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.'

Preaching points

- God positions Philip to be in the path of the Ethiopian eunuch (a man who has significance in his homeland). Who has God positioned you to be near? On your street? In you work place?
- We discover that God is already at work. The eunuch is reading the Scriptures. We might not meet many people who are reading Isaiah on the way to work but God is still at work in their lives. Philip asks the question, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He starts where the eunuch is at and the question helps the conversation to go deep. What questions might we be prompted to ask that take conversations deep than the superficial? How about:
 - What keeps you up at night?
 - Why do you think there is so much suffering in the world?
 - Do you ever get a sense of thankfulness that you can't articulate?
- Philip uses Scripture to explain what Christ has done. Have we thought through which Bible story we might tell some one to explain the Gospel?
- The eunuch responds quickly, gets baptised and leaves with joy. Occasionally people may be ready to make a respond to the Gospel in the moment. When was the last time we face someone an opportunity to accept God's grace?

Challenge:

What questions might God be prompting us to ask this week to take conversations deeper?

PROMPTS IN THE SILENCE

Re-tell the story from Acts 9:1-19

Context

Saul has witnessed and approved of the killing of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The Church is being persecuted and yet Saul has the vision on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:13-14

"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

Preaching points

- This is the only time Ananias is mentioned in the Bible (although there are two others with the same name). He is a very minor character and yet he is a highly significant character in the story of Acts because he goes to Saul!
- Why did God use Ananias? He was living in Damascus and he demonstrates two key qualities:
 1. He hears God in a vision. It would suggest that Ananias made space to connect with God. He answers 'Yes, Lord!' How much space do we make in our lives to listen out for God? Do we expect God to prompt us?
 2. He had the courage to go and meet with Saul, even though he knew of Saul's reputation. Now, Ananias was at first very sceptical! We see that he is just like us in this moment but he does go through with God's command. Are we sometimes too afraid to step out?
- Ananias saw scales fall from Saul's eyes and was involved in one of the pivotal moments of the life of the Church because he made himself available to the prompting of God.

Challenge

Make space for God to speak and when we feel God has prompted us, walk into the opportunity as we never know how significant our part will be in God's story!

PRACTICAL CHALLENGE

We've spoken about God prompting us today. Now here's the practical challenge!

1. Take a Prompt card and spend two minutes prayerfully asking God the question written down. If the question doesn't make immediate sense for you, spend some time thinking through how you can make it apply in your situation.
2. Look out for an opportunity to take action.
3. Feed back what happened.

CONCLUSION

We'll end with this story...

A Native American and his friend were walking on Times Square in New York City when the streets were busy, noisy, and filled with people. The sounds of the city were almost deafening. Suddenly, the Native American said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!" "No, I'm sure of it," the Native American said, "I heard a cricket." "That's just crazy," said the friend.

The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. In utter amazement, the friend said, "That's incredible! You must have superhuman ears."

"No," said the Native American. "My ears are no different from yours. It just depends on what you're listening for." The friend replied, "There is just no way. I could never hear a cricket in this noise." But the Native American simply replied, "It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you."

He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. Even with all the noise of the crowded street blaring in their ears, nearly every person within twenty feet noticed the sound of the coins and turned to look and see if the money that hit the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?" said the Native American. "It all just depends on what's important to you."



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