

This week Pastor Sharon presents the second installment in the six-part sermon series undergirding the "40 Days of Community" campaign at Vineyard Community Church. In "Reaching Out Together", Pastor Sharon and Pastor Debbie Klima join together to illustrate the fact that spreading the Good News is meant to be a shared activity. The goals of 40 Days are to deepen a sense of community between us as believers and, at the same time, to have a lasting effect on the Hampton Roads area. From the beginning, God designed us to reach out to people who do not know Him and to partner with other believers as we do so.

Pastor Sharon teaches that you can only be effective in reaching out if you use purposeful prayer. You can only be effective if you can establish some kind of relationship with those that you want to reach with the Good News. Jesus frequently used familiar examples from the daily lives of people, like crops, building construction, or fishing, to illustrate a point that He was trying to get them to understand. If others can identify with you, they will be more likely to listen to you. If you team up with someone else in your small group, there is an even better chance people will listen. Remember, Jesus sent them out "two by two." Jesus planned for you to work together. What better place than your small group to develop spiritual partners?

Sharon reminds you that you need to lead others in "love." You need to be intentional when you share the Gospel. You have found a wonderful thing in Jesus, and you will naturally want to share it (just the way you like to tell others about everything else that excites you). Be intentional! You are "the authority" when it comes to what God has done for you and for those you personally have seen experience answered prayer. You remember what your life was like before Jesus changed you? How are you different now? As you involve yourself with others, share your own story and then EXPECT God to act on their lives through it. You cannot reach someone else for Christ if you keep to yourself or if you refuse to associate with unbelievers. Jesus spent much of his time surrounding himself with people who were living out-of-control lives, lives filled with sin. Why did He do that? Why did He involve Himself with them instead of staying in the temple where the praying people were? He went into the streets, into the alleyways, into the markets, into all those places where there were people who needed a new life, because His purpose was to reach THOSE people and they were in those places. Be intentional and seek those who need a savior. You do not have to become like them, but they need to see that they can become like you.

Expect God to act! Pastor Sharon points out that "faith" is an action word. It is not about how much faith you may feel that you have. Everything hinges on what you do with the faith God has given you. The Word tells us that God gives a "measure" of faith to each of us. It is His "measure." He decides how much faith is needed for the task He has given you. He will always give you exactly what is needed for the task He wants you to do. You need to purpose to live "out loud" with the new life Christ has given you. The prophet Isaiah, when his sin was removed by the angel of God with a coal from the altar in heaven, began to reach out to others immediately. When God then asked "Who shall we send to speak to the people?", Isaiah spoke up immediately, "Here I am. Send me!" Will you make a friend in your small group, partner with him, and say with Isaiah, "Here I am. Send me."?