

Know Grow Share Show * 2 Timothy 1:8-12, 2:1-2, 3:16-17
December 31, 2023 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

If you've been around Langford for a while, you know that we have a little saying for our mission at the church: know, grow, show, share. Since before my time here, our goal at Langford has been to be a place where people can know God, grow in their relationship with Him, show His goodness in their lives, and share His good gifts and His good news with others... so that they can know Him and grow in Him and the circle continues.

I was thinking about that mission statement this fall and I realized that that's not just a mission for our church; it's also a paradigm for thinking about our own walk with God. First, we come to know God for ourselves. Then we grow in our relationship with Him. Then we show others what God is like. And then hopefully we get to the point where we can share our relationship with God with others, helping them to grow in THEIR relationship with God.

What I'd like to do this morning is to plot those points on a line and then ask ourselves 'where am I on that line?' Where I am on that line and have I progress along it in the last few years?' It being New Year's Eve, people are thinking about 'resolutions;' here's one for you: wherever you are on that line, take another step further in your faith.

Turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Timothy - 2 Timothy is before Hebrews but after the Thessalonian letters – and we're going to root our know-grow-show-share saying in Scripture and 2 Timothy gives us glimpses of each in action. We will start off in chapter 1.

Before that though, we need to talk about the first step in our mission, knowing God.

Now I'll be honest. I sat in church for many years before I actually KNEW God. I knew ABOUT God but my knowledge about Him was probably more influenced by pop culture than it was by the Bible and I really wasn't committed to Him in any meaningful way. I felt like I had to keep God happy by doing enough good things to outweigh the bad and to be honest, that wasn't going so well.

Eventually though, God brought me to the place where I *wanted* to know God for who He really is. I got to a place where I was praying as if God was really there and reading the Bible more and letting God's own Word shape my understanding of who God is.

And I'll tell you, few verses made such an impression on me as 2 Timothy 1:8-9. Just listen to this. We're going to pick up at the end of verse 8:

God, ~~9 who~~ has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

This was a God that I had never known, all my life. My concept of God was frankly more like an Egyptian god, weighing my actions on a scale.

But look at this! God has saved us. GOD has saved us. He's done the work. He's saved us and called us to a holy life. Why? Because I've lived a holy enough life? What does it say? He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. Did you hear that? Not because of what YOU have done. But because that's just who He is. Gracious and merciful.

And the rest of the verse just drives that home. God, ~~who~~ has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus (WHEN?) before the beginning of time (before we even did anything!).

When God created the world, He knew that we would fall away and so He decided even as He hung the stars in the sky that He would go to the effort of creating AND redeeming us. In His great mercy, He decided to save us and having saved us, He called us to a holy life.

That's the God who wants you to know Him. Not the one who is balancing good deeds and bad on a scale. Not the aloof deity lost in his own contemplations. Not the grandpa in the sky who just loves everybody and has no real power to do anything.

The God who invites us to know Him is so invested in us that He made us, and gave His Son to redeem us, not because of what WE do but because of what HE has done. This God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - invites each of us to know Him personally, to turn from sin and to walk with Him.

Do you know Him? Like really KNOW Him? Not just know Him like you know Oprah Winfrey or Guy Fieri. KNOW Him like you know a close friend or parent. Invite Him in and get to know Him better.

Now I know that many of us KNOW God personally so the next step to consider is GROW – growing in your relationship with God.

And God has given us a tremendous resource to help us to do just that. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What you are holding in your hand is a God-given, God-inspired, God-delivered meditation on who God is. It's not an owner's manual; it doesn't go through and say 'If you want this, tell God this.'

It does though tell us who God is, what God is like; it shows us His unfailing love, His unending patience, His hatred of sin and His commitment to justice. It show us how He acts with sinful people, with hurting people, with people like us. It is given to teach us, to correct us, to sand off our rough edges and set us up to do good things that reflect God's goodness to the world.

If you want to grow in your relationship with God, make the time to invest in His Word. We're launching into another year of Bible reading together here; it's a great time to join in and have a community to read Scripture with. If you're not big on reading, there are lots of audio Bibles out there; in fact, if you type a reading into YouTube, you'll come up with all sorts of videos that do the reading for you so you can just listen.

Take time to pray, to learn from other believers. When you're out for a walk, listen to the heavens declare the glory of God, open the eyes of your heart to see how God is working in your life.

Grow in your relationship with God.

So – know, grow, SHOW. When we talk about 'show' as a church, we say 'show God's goodness in our lives;' frankly I think there's a step even before that, and that's being willing to be known as a follower of Jesus.

I remember when I first went to university, there was this 'Church in the Concourse' thing. Once a month, IVCF had a church gathering in the central meeting place on campus and I thought maybe I should go but then I thought 'but who's going to walk by and see that I'm a Christian?' And then the next year, I was invited to play drums at it and then I thought 'but who's going to walk by and see that I'm INVOLVED as a Christian?!'

I had to make a conscious decision to be ok with being known as a believer. And that's something that Paul calls us to in 2 Timothy 1. Look at verse 8 -

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,
9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life... (and then jump down to verse 12).
12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

I love what Paul says there. 'I know who I'm walking with. I know who I believe in. I know that He is the most powerful, most loving, most committed God there is and He is in MY corner, and I'm not afraid to let people know.'

God is the most powerful, most loving, most committed God there is and His in in YOUR corner. Don't be afraid to let people know.

But the next step then is to realize – ‘if they know I’m a Christian, they’re judging God based on me.’ The worst thing for me is getting cut off in traffic by a car with a little Christian fish on the back. I think ‘it just doesn’t line up!’ Let people see the goodness of God through your life. I have a note in my Bible from a sermon I once heard – it says ‘what would people say about God based on your actions?’ I often think about that. Show – that you are walking with God and show what He is like.

So, know-grow-show-share.

Here I’m deviating a little from what we say on the church level. Yes, share God’s good gifts with others and yes, share God’s good news with others, but I think on a personal level, we can add one more thing. Share your walk with others so that they can grow in their walk too.

Here’s what I mean: 2 Timothy 2:1:

NIV 2 Timothy 2:1 You then, my son (this is Paul talking to Timothy), be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Think about how many generations of Christians there are in those two verses:

2 And the things you have heard me say – so that’s Paul showing Timothy how to live in light of the Gospel - entrust to reliable [people] who will also be qualified to teach others.

You’ve got four generations of Christians there, each one helping the next to know Jesus and to grow in their faith and to show the goodness of God in their lives.

There comes a point in the Christian life where you’re not just thinking about your own faith, but thinking about others too and considering how you are building into them. You’re thinking about how to help others in their walk, how to equip them to serve Him according to who they are. You’re actively praying for them, with them, you’re taking what you know about God from your time spent with Him and confidently and accurately helping people to think from God’s point of view. That’s what this share thing is all about – being able to help others in their faith by sharing yours, equipping the next generation for a life of faith.

So, ‘know, grow, show, share.’ Admittedly, this is not exclusively a linear process; as you progress along the line, you’re growing deeper in the steps that came before it. But I still think it’s important to ask: ‘Where am I on that line and have I made progress since last year?’

So, as we stand here on the cusp of a new year, let me ask you: where are you on this line? I have a guess about where each of you are; where do you think you are? And what are some things that you can do to make progress towards the next step this year? I’m thinking about

some ways this year that I can help you progress along this line wherever you are and grow deeper along the way so stay tuned.

Know, grow, show, share; let's take some time to pray about this and invite God to show us the next steps in our hearts.