

Task Force

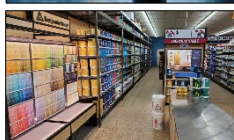
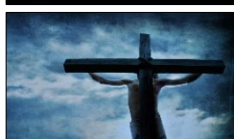
The Commission to Go Fishin'

October 5, 2025



Today we're tackling our call to stand tall in the Great Commission to go fishin'!

Over 30 of you came to our *Conversations* event last Sunday, to practice a *simple approach* to sharing the Gospel (a.k.a. the Good News). And **there's a surge of standing up and speaking out currently sweeping our nation**. So, I want to *jump in* and *begin* by asking each of us to ask ourselves: **Am I up to the task?** Cuz this is what makes life worth living – according to Paul:



The Holy Spirit warns me in town after town that *imprisonment* and *persecutions* are waiting for me. But I do not *consider* my life worth anything to myself, so that I may *finish my task* and **[what's that task, you ask?] the ministry** that I **[and we]** received from the Lord Jesus, **[i.e.] to testify to the good news of God's grace**. – Acts 20:23-24 NET

[Cuz like Paul and all those saved by grace] [God] reconciled us to Himself through **[faith in] Christ** and gave us the *ministry* of reconciliation: **[testifying]** that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, **[and]** not counting people's sins against them. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NIV

We are therefore Christ's **[good news] ambassadors** – 2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV

"For God so loved the world that He gave His *one* and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not *perish* but have eternal life." – John 3:16 NIV

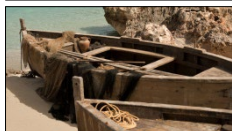
[And His one and only Son said] "A new commandment I give to you, that ... *just as I have loved you*, you also are to *love one another*. **[Because]** By this **[force]** all people will know that you are My disciples" – John 13:34-35 ESV

Ever accidentally tell someone you love 'em? I did. I told a nice lady at a paint store. I often say, "Love ya, bye," on the phone, or "See ya; love ya," in person to those I hold dear. But I just bought some paint. And she said, "Thank you." and I said, "Love ya, see ya later," and turned to go and realized what I'd done, and turned back and said, "I say 'love ya' to my ... that I ... guess I love you!" And she threw her arms out, laughing, and said, "I love you too!" And it was funny and heartwarming. And as I got in my car, **I realized that it was a true, brotherly, Freudian slip.**

"So wherever you go in the world, **[share the love and get ready to]** tell **[anyone and]** everyone the Good News **[of God's love and grace and compassion]**." – Mark 16:15 NOG

[Because] We are *witnesses* ... **[cuz]** He commissioned us to ... *testify* that He is the One appointed by God as *Judge* ... **[and]** **[the Good News is]** that everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins **[by God's grace through our faith]** – Acts 10:39-43 NAB

This is clearly, definitively, distinctly courtroom terminology.



So why is it, when we *hear* that we're *called*, *commanded*, and *commissioned* to be a *witness* to the world, **we recoil at the thought of the dreaded knock; or we picture an extrovert on a street corner?** I'm not *knocking* anyone; I'm just saying **it's odd that we don't picture a witness stand.** You might say, "That's *still* intimidating." I'm not *saying* it's *not*. But *that's* how it's *presented*. And if you *think* about it, it's actually, *oddly*, *comforting*. Because, **a witness doesn't argue the case, or push for a verdict, or bring a conviction, or jump up and say, "Listen up; I'm a witness!"** No. They just *share* what they know when *asked* to take the *stand*. Until then, they **sit quietly** and **wait patiently** and **watch closely** and **listen intently** and **speak softly** in their own words. And you know what *else* is *just* like that? *Fishing!* Which is why:

Jesus called out, **[and still calls out]** "Come *along* with *Me* and I will *show you* how to *fish* for the souls of men!" – Matthew 4:19 TLB

[So] Make it your *ambition* to **[sit quietly]** *lead a quiet life*, [and] to *mind your own business* [of maturing in trusting in the *hope* you have; because the *full force* of our *true task* of *testifying* is *best seen* in our *worst trials*] ... so that your **[consistent]** *daily life* may win the *respect* of outsiders **[who'll desire the peace you naturally display]** – 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 NIV

[So] Do not be *frightened* [of the *fish*]. But *in your hearts* set apart *Christ* as *Lord*. [Which means to] *Always be prepared* [wait patiently, watch closely, and listen intently] to *give an answer* to everyone *who asks you* to give the *reason* [your *Scriptures* and your *firsthand story*] for the *hope* [they want] that you **[obviously]** *have*. But **[speak softly]** do this with *gentleness* and *respect* [and you'll have *nothing* to be *afraid of*] – 1 Peter 3:14-15 NIV

Did you know Pops was a *fishing guide*? I *loved* *launching* the boat, *riding* in the boat, *eating burgers* dad *barbecued* on the boat; and *catching* fish, *reeling 'em in*, and *netting 'em*. But **I hated fish-ING: the sit quietly, wait patiently, watch closely, listen intently, and speak softly part.** Not how I roll, daddy-o! I was often told: **Calm down or you'll scare the fish.** Truer words were never spoken. We're called to be **bold but not brash**. And **passionate but not pushy**. And **courageous but not careless**. "You need to get **SAVED!**" "Well, **YOU** need to get **LOST!**" Because **fish hate being caught!**

[Because] This is the *verdict*: *Light* has come *into the world*, but *people ... will not come into the light* for *fear* that their *deeds* will be *exposed*. – John 3:19-20 NIV

As *Shar* can attest, I often *speak* for the *fish* in *survival shows*, like "*Alone*". When they *catch one* and say, "Thank you for your *sacrifice*." I say, "You're *not welcome!*" Cuz, it makes *Shar* *laugh*. But when *folks* see the *shining proof* of your *faith* in the *form of peace* in your *daily trials* – big or small – they'll *bite* and *thank you!* Cuz **without Christ, true peace is out of reach;** cuz **shame is relentless,** and **success is hollow,** and **life is pointless,** and **death is doom.** *That's* the *bad news* that we *all share* down here. So don't expect a *nibble* till they see your *proof* of your *hope* beyond the *grave*.

[Because] *Faith* is the **[visible, seeable]** *substance* of things *hoped for*, [in *Christ*, in *Scripture*; making it] the *evidence* of things *not seen*. **[In your heart]** – Hebrews 11:1 NKJ

“But, what if I don’t have an answer?” I don’t know. What do you *usually* do? I say, **“I don’t know.”** So do that. Shows *humility*. Earns *credibility*. And it’s what witnesses are expected to say when they’re *unsure*. But **do figure out the reason for the hope you have**. Cuz **if your faith is based on hearsay, it won’t hold up** – on the stand, before the judge, or in the trials of life. So:



See [for yourself] how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, [literally: find it, read it, learn it, and own it] that we would be called *children of God* [by His grace through our faith in His Son]; and such we are [because of the blood of Christ]. For this reason the world does not know us, [understand us] because it did not know Him. ... [But] By this the children of God ... are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not [a child] of God, nor the one who does not love [as Christ loved us. Because that’s the #1 way we practice it!] ... [And] Do not be surprised ... if the world hates you. – 1 John 3:1, 10-14 NAS

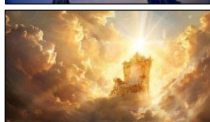
That doesn’t let you off the hook. Cuz **we can’t shy away**. Just like on the witness stand, **“I don’t know” is allowed**. But **“I’m too shy” is contempt**. Because shyness has little to do with courage. If you saw a stranger’s toddler falling into a fire pit, would you be too shy to act? Of course not. Because, to paraphrase 1 John 4:18, **there is no shyness in love**, because love drives out shyness.

Therefore, since [we know that] we have been justified through faith, [and I’m just-if-I’d never sinned!] we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. – Romans 5:1-2 NIV

Do you stand firm in the peace of God’s grace? You should. Because, **to have access is to have acceptance and approval**. And not the formal access granted to a subject before a king, but **the access of a child boldly bypassing all formality to come to their father** who happens to be a king.



Let us therefore [as God’s children] come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help [us stand] in time of need [of peace]. – Hebrews 4:16 NKJ



We had two cats that we got at the Humane Society: Tiger and Lightbulb. That’s Tiger laying down. She’d roll over and expose her stomach – a cat compliment of trust. I could stamp my foot next to her, and she wouldn’t flinch. When we’d pull in the driveway, she’d run out, and roll over, and block us! Honking had no effect. I rolled up really slow to see how close I could get before she’d move. And all she did was meow when the tire started to pinch her tail! Because **that cat knew that she knew she could trust us**. This other, on the other hand, is Lightbulb. Not really. But I don’t have a good photo, because he was scared to death of us. For years. On rare occasions, if we sat real still with a hand hanging over the couch, he’d work up the nerve to nuzzle it. And then he’d lay next to Tiger, peacefully, on the carpet. But the moment we moved, he’d panic. **Tiger knew the peace that far surpassed her understanding**. But **Lightbulb never knew the joy of the trust in our love**.

So, do you stand firm, like a Tiger, in the grace of God’s peace? Or are you still a scaredy cat?

We have “gained access by faith into this grace” of peace “in which we now stand” ...

And we *rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God. – Romans 5:2 NIV

[And remember] It is the glory of God to conceal things – Proverbs 25:2 ESV

[Which is why] [The Lord says] “My ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.” – Isaiah 55:8 NLT

[And why Paul says] You will know Christ’s love, which goes far beyond any knowledge. ...

[Because, the concealed] Glory belongs to God, whose power [of love] is at work in us.

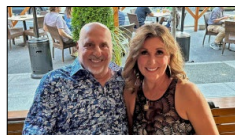
[And] By this power [of Christ’s love] He can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

[Because the] Glory [of the concealed] belongs to God – Ephesians 3:19-21 GWT

Therefore, “we *rejoice* in the *hope* of the [unimaginable] *glory* [of the *concealed things*] of God” ...

[And] Not only so, but [because of our *hope* in the *unrevealed, unimaginable, concealed* things of God] we also rejoice in our sufferings, [not “for” our sufferings – we’re not *masochists* – but *in the midst* of them] because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [to *grit our teeth* and *trust* in God’s *glory* and *cry out* like the man who said to Jesus, “I believe, but help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24); and] perseverance, [produces] character; [the *maturity* to *trust* in God’s *glory* without *gritting* our *teeth* in *unbelief*; like *Tiger*] and character, [produces *greater* and *stronger*] hope. [In the *concealed things* of God; because our *hope* in the *unseen* grows as we *experience* the *reality* of our own *authenticity* in *affliction*, and the *surpassing value* of *peace* and *grace* and *access* and *hope*] And hope [in the *glory* of God] does not disappoint us – Romans 5:3-5 NIV

Because **biblical hope isn’t wishful thinking**. That’s what *unbiblical* hope amounts to. **It’s trust in the unseen in light of the power and love displayed**. Which is why we should be the *most hopeful* people on the planet! We have *peace*. And *grace*. And *access*. And *hope* beyond the grave.



A year ago, we welcomed Mark and Peggy DiSalle: movie producers who joined us on a Sunday after watching us online. Mark passed away last month. And I attended his memorial last week. And Peggy hugged me and cried and said, “He’s in a better place.” And I said, “**Know what I want on my tombstone? So long suckers!**” And she burst out laughing and double high-fived me. Know why? Because she and **we have a glorious, joyful, grace-based hope beyond the grave!** But do you care to share? Because Jesus said:

“You will receive power [to love as He loves] when the Holy Spirit *has* come upon you; and you will be My witnesses [that’s the *task* and the *force*] in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8 NRS

And here we are! In the northwest corner of what would’ve been their *inconceivable* description of the *ends* of the *earth*. So, **how’s it feel to be stationed at the outermost outpost on this corner of God’s Kingdom?** Hopefully, *like* you’re up to the task! Because **deep down, everyone aches to escape the darkness**. Because who doesn’t want *hope* and *peace* and *freedom* from *guilt*? So:

Be wise in the way you *act* toward *outsiders*; make the *most* of every opportunity. Let your conversation be *always full* of *grace* [and maybe even a “Love ya!”] – Colossians 4:5-6 NIV