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Romans 10:17

*"Faith Comes From Hearing"*

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A burglar broke into a house one night. He shone his flashlight around, looking for valuables, when a voice in the dark said, "Jesus is watching you." He nearly jumped out of his skin, clicked his flashlight off, and froze. When he heard nothing more, after a bit, he shook his head and continued. Just as he reached out to grab a cell phone and an iPad, clear as a bell he heard, "Jesus is watching you." Freaked out, he shone his light around frantically, looking for the source of the voice. Finally, in the corner of the room, his flashlight came to rest on a parrot. "Did you say that?" he hissed at the parrot. "Yep," the parrot confessed, then squawked, "I'm just trying to warn you that Jesus is watching you." The burglar relaxed. "Warn me, huh? Who in the world are you?" "Moses," replied the bird. "Moses?" the burglar laughed. "What kind of people name a parrot 'Moses?'" "The same kind of people that name their Rottweiler 'Jesus!'"

I think that burglar got to know 'Jesus' really well. I have some neighbors, friends, and family members that I wish would get to know Jesus really well. Not the Rottweiler Jesus; but the real Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior. I have wonderful neighbors; but some of them aren't Christians. I'm thankful for many good friends, from different parts of my life; but some of them don't believe in Jesus. My extended family is a large cast of characters, and I love them all dearly; but some of them don't know what God's love for them in Jesus Christ really means.

What can I do to help even one of those people to *come to faith* in Christ? What could you be doing to help *bring about*

*saving faith* in the hearts of those people in your life who aren't believers?

Our Bible verse today, Romans 10:17, tells us "Faith comes from hearing..." Paul starts off in this section asking, "How are they" – how are the people who don't know Jesus – "How are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" And then he concludes, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ." So my neighbor who doesn't have faith in Jesus needs to hear the word of Christ. "Faith comes from hearing."

Does that mean that, if we want to help our non-believing friends and family members, we need to preach at them? Holler the Word of God at them? Shout Bible verses through a megaphone? Send out Scripture-filled emails every day to our whole contact lists? Tweet about Jesus incessantly and drive all your Twitter followers crazy?

I've known some Christians -- and you have, too -- who do this stuff. They're real aggressive in sharing the Word -- kind of a Rottweiler approach to evangelism. But I don't think Paul's advocating anything like that, do you? The Rottweiler approach doesn't usually help people come to faith. We don't need to be overdo it, or be overly-aggressive in sharing the Word of God ... but we do need to be sharing the Word of God. "Faith comes from hearing." Hope's mission statement says, "The people of Hope Lutheran Church proclaim and live the Word and love of Christ." That's at the core of who we are, as a church, and as Christians who care about our friends and neighbors.

So how do we help connect our friends with Jesus? How should we go about sharing the word of Christ, and proclaiming Christ's love, to people who don't know him?

Let me show you one way to go about this. Instead of just bombarding someone with Bible verses, try forming a relationship with that person. Take your time, allow that relationship to deepen, and pray that God gives you an opportunity to share the word of Christ in a helpful, natural way. Here are five ways to build a relationship like that.

First step: **bond**. Look for common interests. Get to know what your neighbors do, where they're from. What do you have in common with your friends at work? Maybe it's sports, or kids, or neighborhood issues, or a favorite restaurant. It doesn't matter. but look for common interests, and start to **bond**.

Second step in relationship-building: **learn**. Be careful to listen, to observe. Show interest, and get to know what's important to that other person. What are their kids' names? What is their dog's name? Where do they work? Listen, observe, and **learn**.

Third step: **engage**. If a relationship starts to develop naturally, there may come a point where you can go deeper, and **engage** that person in a more serious conversation. Maybe you hear about a death in the family, or a health issue. Maybe your neighbor's lawnmower broke, or your classmate's boyfriend broke up with her. If a relationship is growing naturally, you may have a chance to **engage** that person on a deeper level.

Fourth step: **serve**. Jesus calls us to **serve** our neighbors, to **serve** our friends, to put our Christian love into action. Take some food next door. Ask if you can lend a hand. Offer to

help when there's a problem. Let that person know you care, and put your caring into action, and find a way to **serve**.

So, **bond, learn, engage, serve**, and then -- fifth step -- **share**. Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to share your story of faith, the story of who Jesus is in your life. This doesn't have to be a practiced speech, or a long, dramatic testimonial. Just be natural about it. Maybe, if the person you're talking with is having a hard time, you can mention how you had a time when you were struggling, and God helped you through it -- and **share** a promise from Scripture that you've leaned on. Maybe you can talk about the power of prayer, if that person is worried about a sick loved one -- and **share** a Bible verse about God's power and love. As relationships grow naturally, through **bonding, learning, engaging, serving**, then **sharing** the Gospel and **sharing** the word of Christ comes more naturally, too.

Now, I'm not suggesting that this approach is always going to work and always going to be best. Every situation is different, as every person is different. Some of you may be Rottweilers at heart, when it comes to sharing Jesus. But try this approach to connecting people with Jesus by building relationships. An easy way to remember it is the word BLESS. B-L-E-S-S: **bond, learn, engage, serve, share**. Please join me in a word of prayer.