

**Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
January 17 & 18, 2015
John Crosby
How to Share
Acts 2**

Probably 100 to 125 of us by now have abandoned us, I mean, have gone to spend the winter in warmer climates. Probably another 75 to 100 are gone this weekend celebrating the Martin Luther King holiday by going to a retreat we have and they're taking a long weekend away. It made me realize how often holidays, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, become just an occasion to get out of school or work. We can lose what it means. Dr. King's holiday would be another one of those, a break in the middle of the winter, but it is not meant to be that way. It's a sign of costly reconciliation, a journey begun and well begun, but nowhere near ended. Would you pray with me?

Lord, I thank You for the privilege of looking into Your Word this weekend, the same Word that Dr. King lifted up, knowing that the path to peace must go through justice and include reconciliation. I pray for our land that we would not only learn, but live the lessons that he walked ahead of us with. In Your Name. Amen.

Would you do me a favor, please, and take out your Bibles or the Bibles in front of you in the pews and turn to John, chapter 1? While you're trying to find that, I thought of this because I was watching golf. If you're a golfer, when you can't play golf, you watch golf, and one of the faces that is best known in golf is this face. [Slide shown.] His name is David Feherty. He's an Irishman who was proud to become an American. He is basically a third-tier golfer, who was never very good, but because there was so much money on the tour, he lasted for a while. He was known for his intense great humor and personality. He was the life of the party wherever he went, whether it was the first tee or the first round of drinks or the 14th round of drinks. His career was marked by working hard, living hard, and playing hard. Feherty inherited the Irish genes and being weaned on whiskey, he found that as the stresses of adulthood and marriage and parenthood grew, it became harder to make putts. A flask of Bushmills seemed to help, and then a bottle a day, and finally more than a bottle of alcohol a day, to where he would find himself as pleasant as possible during the morning and the early afternoon, but by the time dinner came, he would be throwing an empty bottle toward the refrigerator, yelling at his children to bring him another. That was hidden from almost everybody because Feherty was the life of the party.

The reason I know this story is because one time a couple of years ago, David Feherty interviewed Tom Watson, the famous golfer at the top of the heap. They talked about the first time they really remembered getting to know one another. It was at a Pro-Am, two pros playing together with two amateurs. Feherty is there making the crowd laugh and they're going off the tee down some fairway. Watson and Feherty are walking together and Watson turns to Feherty and says, "You're killing yourself, you know?" "What do you mean?" "You know what I mean.

You're killing yourself and you can take others with you." Feherty says, "I remember stopping and turning to look into his eyes and saying, "How do you know?" And Watson said, "Because I've seen your face when I looked at my own in the mirror." Watson also has been an alcoholic, ruining his marriage as Feherty's was ruined, hurting his career and his relationships.

In the middle of the fairway at a Pro-Am, Feherty says, "I know I'm going to die! I can't stop!" Watson said, "Well then, come and stay at my house. Stay at my house for a while and I'll show you how to stop." Feherty lives at Watson's place for three weeks and not only finds out how to stop drinking, but how to start living. In that interview, both of these men are crying, and I'm watching as I'm crying because Feherty said, "You saved my life!" What struck me, friends, was the power of "the ask", the power of somebody saying, "Is everything all right?" in their own way, and then saying, "C'mon, be with me."

We're in the middle of this series on having a life that is worth sharing with others, having a faith that is worth sharing with others. In some very real ways, it is far more than little puppets on the stage. It is offering people the choice of life with God in all its abundance, or just life. Do we have a life worth sharing? Do we share grace that gives life? Watch two pictures of how people invite. Picture No. 1 of how people invite is in John, chapter 1, starting with John the Baptist. The day after John the Baptist said that he was not the Messiah, he was back at the Jordan River with two of his disciples.

29 . . . he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

He probably said something more like, "I am not the Messiah. Look! *There* is the Lamb of God!"

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

They left John.

38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" **39** "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. **40** Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. **41** The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). **42** And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John.

Son of Simon Bar-Jonah.

You will be called Cephas"

Cephas, meaning the rock in Aramaic.

(which, when translated, is Peter).

Peter from Petros, meaning the rock in Greek.

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." **44** Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked."

Really? Nazareth was like Gary, Indiana.

Philip said to him, "Come and see." **47** When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

This is a real Israelite. No fooling him!

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

How did Jesus know he was under the fig tree?

49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Lots of invitations. Lots of "Let's go see this." What do you think that might look like today? If you were going to invite someone today, it would not look like two people walking along the streets or the alleys or the fields of Nazareth. If you were going to invite somebody today, it might look more like this.

[Video begins.]

"Mrs. Edwards!" "What do you want?" "Mrs. Edwards, I know I ask you this like every week, but would you like to ride to church with me? Aw, c'mon, Mrs. Edwards, you'll like my church. We have some hot music. It might not be what you're bumping at all, but it's us. We get down. What do you say, Mrs. Edwards?" "Oh, I suppose."

I've heard it said that 80 percent of first-time church visitors come because someone personally invited them. All people need to feel loved and wanted and for some people, it just takes having someone offer to give them a ride to church. We have something great going on at this church. People's lives are being transformed by God's love. Your homework this week is to find at least one person who could use a little more of that love and invite them to come with you next week. Trust me; it's worth the extra effort.

There was one other piece of music on the way. "Go ahead, your choice. Okay, here we are." "Ohhhhh."

[Video ends.]

Wasn't the whole thing worth it when she turns the boom box off? It's good when a story surprises us because it sucks us in. Those two stories, one from the Bible and one from real life, actually have a lot more in common than you think. The first is that they are both about real events that happened to real people. The video was gotten for the church, showing a guy who

really did invite a woman who looked a lot like that. The Book of John has the ring of history to it rather than a fairytale. This is not *once upon a time*. This is *and then this, and then that, and then this*. One of the ways that we're pretty sure it's history and not a story is because of the odd, quirky, little details. Let's put the story up on the screen here for just a second. If you've got your Bible in front of you, why don't you just underline some the details in the story? These are what give historicity its odd detail. It says John the Baptist was there with *two of his disciples*. Now if it was a story, it would be with three or seven or twelve because those are the lucky numbers, the sacred numbers, of the Bible. But it wasn't, it was a *two* thing. They came around *four in the afternoon*. Somebody remembered. It was about four in the afternoon. Like Andrew and Peter, Philip was from *Bethsaida*, totally truthful to the story. Nathanael is seen sitting under *the fig tree*. The specificity shows that it really happened.

So you want to learn from the story. The story starts saying that the day after John the Baptist said that he was not the Messiah, Jesus was passing by. God is always passing by. John says God always comes to us first. John the Baptist cries out, "Look!" If you are an Old Testament person, "Behold!" "Look!" There is excitement because something important is happening and he says, "Look hard. You might miss it." It is easy to miss God as He passes by. It says, "When the disciples heard John." That's another important verb, and when they heard him, they not only heard him, they understood him. They not only understood him, they agreed with Him. They not only agreed with Him, they got it. "Okay, John. I believe. It's not you. It's Him. I hear you, man." And they followed Jesus.

We are surrounded by words, but we hear the things that make us follow. Then it says, "Jesus turned and saw them following and He said, 'What are you looking for?'" If you look at John's Gospel, these are the very first words Jesus speaks. Jesus' first words in the most symbolic of all the stories about Jesus are, "What are you looking for?" And it's not an accident because the Gospel of John is trying to retell the story of Genesis. Remember the beginning of the world? It says God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening, a little after four in the afternoon, and when they screwed up, God said, "Where are you?" Now, Jesus turns and says, "What are you looking for?" because people are still lost. We don't know where we are or what we should be looking for and Jesus comes, not by accident. I think Jesus also says, "What are you looking for?" to show us that talking to people about faith is a lot less than talking to people about faith. We talk about and think about planting seeds, about making an invitation, about standing near an open door, all good metaphors, but one of the very best ways to talk to people about faith is to not talk, it's to ask questions.

If you have your Bibles open, let's look at another story where you can dissect the passage. What strikes you is how many questions there are. "What do you want?" "Where are You staying?" "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael says to Jesus, "How do you know me?" If you want to get someplace in a relationship with somebody, don't talk *at* them. Ask them and listen. Jesus doesn't come up uninvited and say, "This is your lucky day. Here's a get-out-of-hell-free card." That's not evangelism. There is a relationship or an opening that comes from questions, and questions lead to more questions. The reply of the disciples is "Well, where are You staying?" That's the key question for the church, by the way. In John, "Where are You staying?" is a way to say, "Where should the church be?" Well, the church should be with Jesus. "Where are You staying, Jesus? We ought to get close to You." Jesus says, "Come, follow Me. You'll see where I stay and what I do." John implies here that just getting together, just spending time with Jesus, talking with Him normally is enough to change somebody's life. One more time, just spending time with Jesus and listening to His story is enough to change somebody's life.

A sign of that is what these disciples do. Immediately, it says, the very first thing that Andrew does is to go out and say, "We have found the Messiah. We found Him! We have found Him! We have found Him!" Circle this. Five times in these verses one word is used again and again, *find, found, finding, found, found*. It's all about somebody who is lost being found. It's about somebody who is valuable being discovered. It's about someone who changes the world. It's not about converting somebody. It's not about coming to church. It's about finding Jesus. Jesus does His first two miracles in this story. We don't usually see it, but the first two miracles that John describes are when Jesus tells two different people who they really are or who they are really supposed to become. Peter gets a new name. Nathanael is shown who he really is by someone who couldn't possibly know.

The last thing I got out of this story is that when Philip goes out and says, "We've found Him; come and see Him," Nathanael isn't buying it. "That's crazy. Nothing good can come from Gary, Indiana. I don't know what you've been drinking, but could I have some?" What does Philip do? He does not argue. He does not try to prove he's right. He just says, "Come and see. See for yourself." I'm convinced that John is trying to teach us how to invite people the way that Jesus did and it comes down to two things. First, you have to have somebody somewhere pointing clearly to who Jesus is. Somebody somewhere in your life needs to be pointing clearly to who Jesus is, what Jesus says, and what Jesus means for them. Sometimes it will be a church where people, a group of people and not just the person up front, are pointing clearly to who Jesus is. And the second part of this is to realize that we all have different roles in inviting family and friends just to come to Jesus. That's what this is about. Not trying to convince them, but inviting them to come to Jesus and check Him out.

How does that start? Well, I think it starts, frankly, with you looking at your relational world and saying, "Who would I invite? Everybody I know goes to church." That actually is the problem. It really is! I saw a chart just last week that shows how somebody comes to Jesus, and after a while, their non-Christian friends go off a cliff and they just have Christian friends. You have to do something about that. You have to get a better class of friends. So, we need to find somebody to invite and we need to recognize that everybody has a different role in this process. I'll say this twice. Not only is there a role here for you, but there is something that is not being done that God wants done if you are not doing it. Not only is there a role for you here, but there is something not being done that God wants done if you are not doing it.

What are the different roles I'm talking about? The first one is easy. You've got a preacher. In this story, it's John the Baptist, right? The preacher's job is just to keep pointing to Jesus over and over in different ways so that you will see Jesus more in your life and you will be able to draw others to Him. The second thing is the inviters. "Have you heard the story about Jesus?" They want to invite somebody else to meet Jesus and as is so often the case, this is a lot easier to show you than to tell you. I'd like to show you the story of one of our brand new members. She's got no expertise in this at all, just a heart for it.

[Video begins. To view, see link below]

Hi, my name is Ellen. My husband, my two girls, and I started attending CPC this last spring. My first Sunday coming here, I came by myself with my three girls. Within the first ten minutes, I knew that this was a potential new church home for us or at least a place that I wanted to check out further and come again. It kind of started with me walking in

with my daughters and being warmly greeted at the front door by an older gentleman. I enjoyed the kind of multigenerational aspect of it. It was rather obvious that I didn't know where to go with my daughters and he was very quick to introduce me to another member, another young mom who was very gracious to kind of drop what she had going on to lead me to the children's area to drop off my girls. I really appreciated it because she clearly wasn't on staff. She wasn't a greeter, but she was very kind about helping out in my situation.

After the service, I made my way to the Welcome Center area and low and behold, I actually knew the woman on the cover of the women's Mom's Morning brochure which kind of made me chuckle. I was very quick to call her after my positive experience here to say, "I'm going to your church and you're a celebrity! I see you're in charge of the Mom's Morning there and I'm anxious to check it out. I've been really pleased with my experience thus far." When I went to Mom's Morning, it was essentially the same experience. Within the first ten minutes, I loved how well organized it was, how warm and inviting everybody seemed to be, how respectful of our time they were. Really, I sat in my seat thinking of all the people that needed to be there who I couldn't wait to invite to the next Mom's Morning.

I think I was in the parking lot already calling a couple of close friends of mine, neighbors who live in the area. I invited my sister, really anybody that I spoke with, even at the YMCA. We go to the Southdale YMCA and after dance class, I said to the moms there, "Hey, you need to go check this out." That was one of the first things I was telling people. "If you're free on a couple Wednesday mornings a month, you need to go check out Mom's Morning. Now I have my sister coming. I have a couple of my neighbors coming. Two of us have gone through the new member class since then so I kind of have my own entourage, if you will, that I've brought into CPC through Mom's Morning. I invite friends and family here because CPC has been the highlight of our family's year and I want them to experience the same thing, and people have taken me up on it so it's been a lot of fun.

[Video ends.]

Now, I'm not positive about this, but it may be that Ellen has the spiritual gift of being an inviter. Not all of us are preachers. Not all of us are world-class inviters. There are different roles. She's here because somebody who was not a professional inviter told her about it and then she in turn started to invite others. But then did you notice in the story that there are other people involved? There are people who stand at the door. I love it that the person she calls an older person is a 50-year-old friend of mine! There are people who are hosts. In the inviting process, in the coming-to-Jesus process, you need people who are connectors, who love other people and just say, "I noticed you weren't here last week. Why don't you come and sit with me this week?" "Over there is a group of people you would really like." "Could I ever have a cup of coffee with you?"

Once the ice has been broken by an inviter, it's imperative that they not feel like they sit here for years and feel like nobody would know. Part of the process of coming to Jesus is coming to the people of Jesus. That requires preachers and inviters and hosts, but may I tell you that I think the inviting-people-to-Jesus process is incomplete without a group of people I'd call servants. Some of you feel like you express your faith through doing things. Through wiping kids' butts in the toddler room, through building Urban Homeworks houses, through going on mission trips,

through taking care of junior high kids, you are servants. When you serve, people who have been invited see you and they start to connect the dots if you lift your head up from what you are doing to serve and say, "You want to come with me next week?"

We've got this thing called The Plunge. It's a chance for us in the suburbs to be engaged in the city. No mention of "Do you know the four spiritual laws that separate you from eternal damnation?" None of that. Serving in the Name of God and the heart of Jesus, all of those different roles are there for you. So let me repeat, not only is there a role for you here, but there is something not being done that God wants done if you are not doing it. I have in my notes, "Bang hard on the pulpit at 9:30." You're way too comfortable. You've been here too long. You've got too many friends. You need to look out. For the sake of the living God, for your own sake, for the sake of your spiritual life, open your eyes.

Ellen did not have to be guilted into inviting somebody. She could not stop herself. But it is never risk-free, so if I have excited you about this or guilted you about this or even scared you a little about this, whatever it takes, I'd like to show you how you can do it. At the end of the pews are these little circles. Whichever end you are at that has the circles, pass them down so everybody gets one. The circles have two sides. I got this idea from Andy Stanley. He said, "It's hard for people to know when it's safe to invite somebody." "I'd do it, honest, but I never know when. Somebody is talking about their pet poodle and it seems hard to shoot from there to 'Would you like to come to church?' How do I know when to invite?" Andy says, and this is on the back, that there are three pieces to this, *when they say this, when I hear this, I do that.*

"I'm new."

When I hear somebody say, "I'm new here," I say, "Why don't you come . . ." Sometimes it's "Why don't you come to my church?" but sometimes it's "Why don't you come to my men's group?" Sometimes it's "Let me show you where the kids' program is." Sometimes it's "Well, let me tell you some of the things that newcomers want." This is a natural question that brings invitations to an easy place. "I'm new here." *When I hear that, I do this.*

"I'm hurting."

When somebody says, "This has been the worst year of my life" or "My marriage broke up" or "My dad died" or "My job went away" or "I wake up in the morning feeling guilty that I've let everybody down," that is an invitation to you. *When I hear this, I say that.* When somebody is saying to you, "I'm hurting," say, "Why don't you come to our Al-Anon program?" "We just started a new group here for moms and dads who are experiencing the agony of infertility. If you're hurting because of that, why don't you come with us?" "You know, your kid is just a holy terror. We've got a group of people here who would love to walk with you through that." And here's the key. Don't invite them just to go to Alcoholics Anonymous; invite them to go *with* you to this place. "Hey, why don't we go to that?"

"I'm overwhelmed."

When I hear this, I say that. "I'm new here," "I'm hurting," or how about this, "I'm just overwhelmed. I'm confused. I hear you talk about your faith. I hear you talk about God and it makes sense for you, but it makes no sense to me." "I'm overwhelmed with all the choices, all the emotions, all the experiences. I just need a little help sorting things out." *When I hear this, I*

say *that*. You could say, “Why don’t you come with me? I’ve started to go to this Bible study. I don’t go there every week, but when I go, it seems to help.” “You know, you might come to our church. Next week we’re starting a series on anxiety.” Literally, in two weeks we are. We’re going to start a series on how you can have peace in an anxiety-filled world. You have tons of friends whose stomachs are twisted in knots. When they say, “I’m overwhelmed,” why don’t you say, “Well, why don’t you come with me?”

So, we are not always inviting to church; we are listening to questions the way that Jesus did and responding with invitations. Could I just share with you one more tool, easiest invite you’ll make all winter? Last August we were at a conference and for the second year, I heard one of the hosts who was just a knock out. The guy has been on the Tonight show. He’s been on David Letterman. He has all kinds of comedic credentials and he had us rolling. We decided back then that we needed a mid-winter break. It was just going to be for us, and we were going to invite you to come and have a mid-winter break two weeks from last night, a week from Saturday night. We are going to have this guy here in the sanctuary and I realized—there is not an easier invite that you can make all winter. Watch this for two minutes.

[Video starts.]

I’m going to church as an adult, right? For the first time I start going to church. I walk in and the pastor is like, he says, “I want you to pray with your neighbor.” I’m like, “My neighbor don’t go to this church. I don’t know, you want me to call my neighbor on the phone? That’s creepy. I ain’t going to do that.” But then he explained to me, “Well, your neighbor is the person sitting next to you.” “Listen, I’m brand new at this Christian stuff. I didn’t even know you’re supposed to pray out loud, let alone with this lady. I don’t even know this lady. What am I supposed to pray about? Lord, help these bumps go down on this lady’s face? I don’t know what I should pray about! I don’t know what I’m supposed to pray about, right?”

She went first. She was praying all good. She must have been John the Baptist’s little sister or somethin’. She was like, “Dear heavenly Father, You said in Your Word in the 6th chapter in the thirty-third verse in the Book of Matthew, the 601st word on page 1,248. Lord, You said, But seek...S as in search, E as in everywhere, E as in excellent, K as in kingdom. You are the Alpha Nissi, Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-Rapha. I’m thinking, “Man, she even knows his nicknames.”

Now it’s my turn to pray, right? I don’t have the spiritual vocabulary for this, but I’m not going to let her out-pray me, so I go, “Okay, God, first of all, You are good people. You are good, Lord. You are good to the last drop, Lord. Lord, I’ve just got to obey my thirst, Lord, You know, because choosy moms chose Jesus so, Lord, because, You know, as the rocket’s red glare, Lord, it gave proof through the night, Lord. I believe I can fly. Amen.”

[Video ends.]

Okay, you can invite somebody to that, right? It’s filled with laughter. It’s the middle of the winter, we’re laughing at ourselves. It’s a way for us to connect to people that is totally non-threatening, and it would be a wonderful evening.

On the flip side of this card are four examples of *when I hear this, I do that* that come from our relational circles. If somebody says to you, “I don’t have a sense that I know where to go,” they need to be inspired. Take them to a Women Who Inspire event. If somebody says, “I want to have a life that’s more meaningful,” show them how they can serve with the poor and invite them to The Plunge. You go to The Plunge with them and it will be good for both of you. If somebody you know is in trouble financially, and trust me on this, somebody you know is in trouble financially, or they are just keeping their noses above water, they need to hear you say, “Why don’t you go with me to this Financial Peace thing and start to make a move.” But if nothing else, surely you could invite a friend and say, “Do you want to go to this thing next Saturday? It’s going to be so funny. You’ll laugh your socks off.” And that is how the movement of Jesus Christ spreads around Planet Earth.

Lord Jesus, we started with the idea that people around us are dying, that David Feherty is just a dramatic example of what it’s like to live and to die without You around. I pray, dear God, that You will give us eyes to see, that You will open the eyes of our hearts to see the lives of people just like us, and that not out of duty and not out of guilt, but out of joy for what You have done for us, You will help us invite them to come to know You in a fresh way to live forever. Amen.

Link to video shown during this service: <https://vimeo.com/118142679>
(Worth Having, Worth Sharing: Ellen’s Story)

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.