

### “The Direct Approach” – Acts 2:22-41

One Saturday afternoon in 1858, a man named **Edward Kimball** went to a shoe store in Chicago, Illinois. The man was a Sunday School teacher and he was concerned for the eternity of one of his Sunday School boys and the boy worked at the shoe store so Kimball paid him a visit there, talked to him in the back room and led that young teenage boy to Jesus by sharing the Gospel with him. And that in itself is a good story but it's just the beginning.

That young boy's name was **DL Moody** and Moody went on to pastor and preach and share the Gospel to millions of people and that was before TV or internet or even microphones. So, that's a good story but not the end because a man named **Wilbur Chapman** came to know Jesus listening to Moody and Chapman became a preacher and he preached to thousands as well. And one of those thousands was a professional baseball player named **Billy Sunday**. Sunday came to know Jesus, quit baseball and he preached to thousands.

Cool story but it's still not over because a man named **Mordecai Ham** was saved listening to Billy Sunday and he became a preacher. And he had a tent revival one night in Charlotte, North Carolina where two young teenage boys walked in hoping to stay long enough to check out the girls and make fun of the preacher. But they were disappointed because they couldn't find a seat so they started to leave. But an usher saw them walking out, grabbed them and made some seats for them and they stayed and one of those boys was saved in that meeting. And his name was **Billy Graham**. And, as you know, Billy Graham probably shared the Gospel with more people than anybody that has ever lived. All because one Sunday School teacher felt the Holy Spirit tell him to go to the shoe store that Saturday afternoon in 1858.

Don't you wish the Holy Spirit would use you like that? Don't you wish He would work in your life to bring revival to the world...or at least to your household? The problem is that you are no preacher. That's not a gift that God has given you, right? You have some gifts but they don't include being able to change your household, much less the world. Well, I hope that is not what you think because Paul told the church at Corinth, *“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”* (I Cor. 12:7).

That means that the Spirit of God has given each of us gifts and together we can use them for the sake of our families, our church and our world. We all have different gifts so that we can all reach different people and together we can reach everybody. Now, while you may or may not have the gift of prophecy or preaching; you may or may not have the gift of evangelism; you may or may not have the gift of teaching but we are all disciples of Jesus and therefore we should learn from Jesus and then tell others what we have learned. That's the definition of a disciple.

As a disciple, we all have different personalities – and aren't you glad? Wouldn't it be boring if everybody was the same? I want us to see that there are ways to be a disciple and to make more disciples using your own personality and your own spiritual gifts to witness to the people that God puts in our lives.

For the next six weeks or so, I want us to see the different ways that God made and used different types of people and in this we will see that all of us can and will be used by God if we are just obedient to doing what He calls us to do.

Turn to **Acts chapter 2** in your Bibles to the story of Peter preaching right after Pentecost. It was at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was given to all believers for all time and when He showed up, He changed everything. You would expect Peter to stand up and say something at this point. He was real good about saying stuff. The problem was he rarely said the right thing.

All through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Peter would blurt out something inappropriate or do something stupid or just flat fail at whatever he was trying to do. I think that's why so many of us like old Pete because we can identify with him. He was impulsive and immature. He had good intentions but wasn't wise enough to do what he was supposed to. Shoot, it's like looking into a mirror for some of us!

But in **Acts 2**, the Holy Spirit comes into Peter and uses him and speaks through him in a way that is uniquely Peter and yet could only be the Holy Spirit at work. Let's read **Acts 2:22-24** first.

*Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But*

*God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Now go to **verse 36**.

*36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

Stop right there. Peter, Peter, Peter...even with the Holy Spirit, he got it wrong. Everybody knows a good sermon has three points and a poem. Everybody knows your points need to start with the same letter. And you have to have some funny illustrations about your dogs going fishing or something, right? It’s sad really. Man, too bad he didn’t ask me before he spoke, huh? 😊 Well, even getting it wrong, the Holy Spirit used him to bring 3,000 people to a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

He also used Peter in a way that used Peter’s personality. Peter was never one to mince words and even here, Peter used the direct approach to preach the Gospel to the people around him. He basically said, *“Way to go you morons, you just killed the Messiah. Now here’s how I know it and what you should do now.”* And it worked. It says they were cut to the heart.

Now, if you are going to use the direct approach, you have to make sure you don’t just come off as rude. It can easily be taken that way. A while back I did a funeral for a friend and I got to the funeral home way early. They were just then bringing in the body and all the flowers and stands and everything needed for the funeral. I watched and listened as the man in charge barked orders at all of the employees, especially one nice young lady who, it was obvious, was trying very hard to do everything right.

But it wasn’t enough for this little banty rooster of a boss. He strutted around in his expensive suit and was just rude to everybody. You know the kind. Once he got onto the

young lady for something he admitted was not even her fault but he scolded her never the less. I guess he saw me giving him the ministerial stink eye and he said to me, *“I’m sorry. I’m blunt and I’m a perfectionist. It’s just how I am.”* And I sat there thinking, *“No, little man, you’re just a jerk.”*

So, be direct in your witness, if that’s how you are but be aware that it’s easy to come off as a jerk. You may think that God gave you the gift of telling it like it is but make sure you tell it in love. Peter absolutely did it in love and because his personality was direct and bold, that’s how he preached.

Now, a common way of being direct is you have to prove what you are saying. There’s no real room for discussion or debate. This is how it is. Take it or leave it. Peter’s **first proof** was proving Jesus was the Messiah by reminding them of His miracles, wonders and signs in **verse 22**. *“Miracles, wonders and signs”* are all supernatural manifestations of God’s power designed to get people’s attention and point them to Jesus.

Do we still see miracles, wonders and signs today? Absolutely. We have an example in our midst this morning. How long has it been, Belinda? She was a literal broken heap on the sidewalk with two broken legs and today she doesn’t even limp. That was a miracle. We wonder at the power of God through that miracle and it points like a sign to our Savior, Jesus. Every time you mention it, Belinda never fails to say, *“Glory to God.”* That’s what miracles are for.

Do you remember in **John 3** when Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? Nic was a Pharisee and was highly invested in being part of the ruling class and Jesus was a huge threat to that investment. But Nicodemus wasn’t blind. He could see that Jesus was performing miracles that only God could do and in **verse 2** Nicodemus says, *“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”*

In **John 11**, Jesus raised Lazarus back to life and it says that some of the people that witnessed this went back to the Pharisees and told them what they saw and so it says the Pharisees plotted to kill Him. They couldn’t dispute His miracles but they still rejected Him because they loved sin. You can expect that same response today when you use the direct method.

Peter's **second proof** was the prophecy of David in **verses 25-31**. When Peter used the name David, their ears perked up. Using the name David to people in Peter's day was like using Ronald Reagan's name to today's conservative politicians. You know what I mean? *"Oh...well, if Reagan said it or did it, it must be true."*

They knew David was a man after God's own heart and he was their greatest king and they loved and respected him all those years later. So, Peter quoted **Psalms 16** where David prophesied about the resurrection of the Messiah and Peter showed the people that David obviously wasn't talking about himself. It could only be Jesus.

Here's the deal for us today. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is a foolish fantasy. However, if the resurrection of Christ did occur, it confirms His life, His message, and His work. It is the basis of our hope of life beyond the grave. Christ is alive, and the evidence is overwhelming.

There are dozens of passages like this one Peter uses that prophesied the resurrection of Jesus. It is a fact that believers and non-believers alike saw the empty tomb. All they had to do to disprove the resurrection was show the dead body of Jesus but they couldn't. Another thing about the resurrection is that if the disciples were faking it, do you think they would all be willing to die for the hoax? Because they pretty much all did. They all lost everything including most of them lost their lives. They knew it to be true and because they did, we do too.

That's a fact and a good point to make if you use the direct approach. Peter's **third proof** was what the Holy Spirit had done in the men standing there that day. Peter is basically saying what I told you about Peter earlier. He used to be a bonehead. He used to be immature and constantly saying the wrong thing but in **verse 33** Peter is obviously in awe of what the Holy Spirit has done in his own life and he says so.

He says the Holy Spirit has poured out what you see and here today. Don't you know Peter was amazed that he was able to make such a convincing argument? If they had asked him the day before, he probably would have said something stupid but today he sounded like a scholar. If you have ever felt led to witness to somebody, you may have felt the same power.

Have you ever been witnessing to someone or answering their question and something comes out of your mouth and you think, *"Where did that come from? I didn't know that*

*myself until I just said it!*” Or maybe the Spirit guides you somewhere or to someone and things turn out way different than you think.

I’ve told you this before but it’s a perfect example. I used to work at a place that customized trucks and one of my co-workers was really on my heart because he told me he didn’t believe Jesus was the way to Heaven. So, I kept watching for the opportunity to witness to him and finally got my chance. He was working on something underneath the truck and I needed to do something under there as well.

So, as I was gathering up the tools I needed, I started praying. *“Lord, give me the words. I’ve got him now, Lord, you just give me something profound and whatever you tell me to say, I will say.”* But as I got my creeper on the floor and all my tools gathered, the only thing I heard from God was, *“Say something about church.”*

*“Say something about church?”* No, God, you don’t understand, I’m ready to witness. I’m ready to lay out the Gospel and proclaim you as King of kings and Lord of lords. Just tell me what to say.

Again, all I heard was, *“Say something about church.”* Now, I didn’t hear it audibly. The rafters didn’t shake and there was no smoke coming from my toolbox. But I heard it plainly. *“Say something about church.”* And it almost made me mad. I’m not kidding. I was upset because I was ready to lead this man to Jesus but I knew I couldn’t without the Spirit’s help and all He was giving me was, *“Say something about church.”*

Well, fine! If that’s all I’m gonna get, then that’s all I’m gonna give. And I got under there and got situated on my back on the creeper and I said, with absolutely no energy, *“Rick, we had a good day at church yesterday.”* And do you know what happened? Rick put down his tools, propped himself up on his elbow and said, *“Really? Tell me about it.”*

So, I did and he listened. And then one thing led to another and I started telling him about Heaven and Hell and sin and grace and repentance and forgiveness and I couldn’t believe what was happening. God used me with a bad attitude to share the Gospel with a man who desperately needed it in a way that brought attention and glory to God through His Son Jesus and all I had to do was say something about church.

I’ll be honest. I did not see a great revival that day like Peter did and you might not either. But that’s not up to you. Being obedient IS up to you. Being ready, willing and able to say

what you are supposed to say is up to you. I know you don't **feel** qualified. You shouldn't. You don't have to be a good speaker. You don't even have to be a good person. You can't do it on your own but when you admit to God that you will say what He wants said and that your neighbor or your friend or your family member will have to jump over your dying body to get to Hell because you love them too much then God will speak through you.

One of my favorite stories about **D.L. Moody** is once, when walking down a certain street in Chicago, Mr. Moody stepped up to a man, a perfect stranger to him, and said: "*Sir, are you a Christian?*" "*You mind your own business,*" was the reply. Mr. Moody replied: "*This is my business.*" The man said, "*Oh, then, you must be D.L. Moody.*"

**\*Music\***

God can and will use the direct approach. Say whatever God wants you to say. Say it in love and let the Holy Spirit speak through you whatever He wants said and leave the results to Him. Do you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you? Do you want to? All you have to do is believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no man gets to the Father but through Him. (John 14:6)

Then repent of your sins and ask God to forgive those sins and He will. When you have done that He will change you and every day you will become a little more like Him. You will have the Holy Spirit inside of you and as **Isaiah 30:21** says, "*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'*" He will guide you and comfort you and use you to make more disciples just like you. If that does not sound like what has happened in your life, I would love to pray with you right now as the music plays.