"ABC's of Salvation"

November 8, 2026 First Christian Church

Scripture Text: Romans 3:23; 6:23, 5:6,8; 10: 9-10,13; 8:1,38-39

Since our "Contagious Faith" small group study began, we have talked about our need as a congregation to reclaim the first part of our mission statement – "to bring people to Christ". We have talked about how people are made up of three parts – body, mind, and spirit – and how our culture is feeling the hurt of an undeveloped spirit and is desperately seeking help, but looking in the wrong places. We talked about the gift of hope that we have which others are so eagerly searching for, and how thankful we are that God is the one who has promised to work through us, so it is not just us trying to reach our friends, family, and neighbors. Yet we know we have to move it beyond ideas and into action. We have to do better in this area of inviting people to Jesus and church.

But what exactly is it we are supposed to do? What is our book author calling us to? What is this congregation calling us to? Pastor, are you really saying I can and should have a conversation that changes someone from a questioner to a believer, from clueless to Christian, from hell bound to heaven bound? Me? Well, yea. Our "Contagious Faith" study has helped us find our natural styles of sharing and has given us some tools to help share. This morning I want to share with you a little more on how to help them cross that line and become a Christian.

Now, before we begin, I need you to know there are no magic words. This is not a Harry Potter thing where if you say the spell right, it works and they become a Christian, but if you say it wrong, they turn into a toad. Our God knows your heart and knows the heart of the person you are talking with; and God can fill-in any blanks and make it work. What I am going to share is an outline which you can work with, flexing it and adapting it to the situation you find yourself in.

I am going to start with what is known as the Roman's Road to Salvation. Through the Scripture passages from Romans that we read this morning, it answers: who needs salvation, why we need salvation, how God provides salvation, how we receive salvation, and the results of salvation.

The reality is everyone needs salvation. If we are able to look at ourselves honestly, we know we are not perfect. Some of us are good, but we ain't perfect. We have times when our selfishness overcomes our generosity, our anger and resentment overcomes our love, our perception of how things should be done competes with the way God is doing things. In those times when what we think, say and do don't fall in line with God's will, we sin. And that kind of selfishness is inescapable. It is a part of all of us. So Romans 3 reminds us, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All. And the fact that we don't do what God created us and calls

us to do, means we deserve punishment. To have no consequences from disobedience is simply not fair or just. And Romans 6 proclaims, “the wages of sin is death.” But God is not only a God of justice that knows disobedience needs punishment, God is also a God of mercy and love. Romans 5, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly… God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” Jesus took our punishment for us. The punishment was still needed to be doled out, and it was, but Jesus stood in our place and took it for us. But how do I get that to apply to me? How can I make Jesus’ sacrifice apply to my sins? Romans 10, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart, leading to righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, leading to salvation… everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What that means is when we take Jesus as our Lord (which means boss) and Savior (the One who died for me), then as Romans 8 says, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

That is Roman’s Road of Salvation, and if that makes sense to them, you encourage them to pray, either out loud or with their inside voice. Pray what you just went over. Better yet, let’s do it together right now. If the Roman’s Road journey makes sense to you, pray to God right now. I’ll lead you, but you talk to God using your own words and sharing your own heart.” First, say hi to God and let God know who is calling. Now, in your own words, admit to God you are a sinner and have fallen short of who God calls you to be, and that as a sinner, you deserve death. Now let God know you believe Jesus Christ died on the cross to save you from sin and death. Ask God to forgive you for your old life and let God know you are starting a new life in Jesus. Now just pause, and pray to receive the gift of salvation. Amen and welcome into the faith. If that was your first time to do that, share that with someone today to help it sink in.

The Roman’s Road gives us the theological, Biblical and practical approach to helping people who are ready to come to Jesus. But we can break it down even further to the ABC’s. A – admit. Admit you are not ready to meet God because you are not worthy of coming into God’s presence. B – believe. Believe in Jesus Christ as God’s Son and receive Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. C – confess. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to God and to others. ABC – admit, believe, confess.

Or if you want to break it down even further into Mike language. Are you tired of pretending that you have it all together, that you have all the answers, and you don’t need any help. Then pray, no longer my way God, but Yours. Forgive me for following me and what I think and how I feel. Today God, I start following You. Jesus simply said, “Follow Me.”

Again, there are no magic words that need to be said. Just asking for forgiveness and moving from themselves or whatever other voice they have been listening to and following, to listening and following God. That is the moment of salvation, the moment of being saved, and there doesn't need to be anyone else present. Just you leading them in a prayer to God. Helping people come to that moment is what our "Contagious Faith" author is driving for.

But let's also be honest here. That is the wedding, not the marriage. The wedding starts the marriage, but it is what happens after the wedding that makes or breaks the marriage. It is a lifelong journey of fulfilling those vows, not just making them. So, yes, I love the stories of one person leading another to salvation by Roman's Road or the ABC's. Those conversions are amazing moments which you as individuals can lead people through. But being a Christian is more than a single conversation. It is a journey in which the church is an important part.

After "the moment" comes the living it out, and that is where our author ends and church begins. That is when it is vital that the new Christian plug into a church to start learning those essential practices of the Christian Life like we learned in our last study. Not only learning them, but practicing them: worship and prayer, study, serving, giving and sharing the gospel with others. So the conversations we are looking for are not just with non-believers, but also non-practicers. Folks who used to go to church. People who say they believe in God but have not been to church in over a year. Many of you say you don't know anyone who is not a Christian, but you do know folks who are not living out their faith. It is time to help them move back toward wholeness, toward peace, toward abundant life, toward eternal life, toward Jesus. What happens after the wedding matters.

Before I end, let me just say, "I know." These outlines have a lousy opening line. It looks like the conversation will go, "Hello, my name is Mike and I am here to let you know you are a no good, rotten, lousy sinner who is in line to burn for eternity." And that is not a very good opening line. But can I share something I have learned? That is where most people already are. As you start by listening, people who are searching and coming to faith, they start there. One might say they are tired of working so hard and nothing really changing – like what they do doesn't really matter. Another will hint about being afraid to die because they don't know if they have been good enough. Another talks about being at their wits end and needing some help. Yet another just wonders if they are good enough – good enough for their spouse, good enough for their kids and grandkids, because they just don't feel right about themselves. Some just don't like who they see in the mirror. Then you get to say something like, "It sounds like you have already done the hard part of becoming a Christian. You realize you need something more in this life. The voices and instructions you have been listening to and following are not making it. You need a new path to follow. You need God. A God who not only forgives you, but helps you."

The gift of wholeness. The gift of hope. The gift of peace. The gift of meaning. The gift of eternal life. These are the things you share, when you share in invitation to Jesus and to church.

Mike Van Heyningen