**Introduction: The Parable of the Swimmer**

- He was popular
- He was a “party animal”
- He was a #1 athlete
- He swore profusely
- He is “in” and “cool”
- He was very unreligious
- He was dating a beautiful girl
- He was totally **open** to Christ
- His question: “Chip, why didn’t you...?”

**The Lesson:** I didn’t share God’s love with him because I believed a **lie**.
7 “Strongholds”:

Lies we must demolish daily in order to share God’s love with our world

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV)

- **Stronghold #1**: People are not **open**!

  Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

  John 4:35-36 (NIV)

- **Stronghold #2**: Sharing Jesus’ love is reserved for spiritual **superstars** and people with outgoing personalities!

  I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

  Romans 1:16 (NIV)

- **Stronghold #3**: Witnessing is something I do vs. something **“I am.”**

  But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

  Acts 1:8 (NIV)
• **Stronghold #4:** Sharing the “good news” is an event vs. a **process**.

    *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

    1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (NIV)

• **Stronghold #5:** He/She will never come to Christ vs. God desires **all** people to be saved.

    *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

    1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV)

• **Stronghold #6:** I’m just not bold enough vs. I just don’t **care** enough.

    *For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*

    2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NIV)
• **Stronghold #7:** I need to “try harder” to love people vs. I need to experience more of God’s love personally.

*I tell you, her sins – and they are many – have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.*  

Luke 7:47 (NIV)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Which of the 7 strongholds do you tend to believe?

2. How does believing these myths impact our sharing Christ's love with others?

3. How could you “love others for Jesus’ sake” in your relational network this week?

**Homework:**

Meet a “need” of someone who you assume is not a Christian and winsomely identify yourself as a follower of Jesus.
Introduction: Oh, how He loves us....

- The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast loyal love... He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast loyal love toward those who fear Him.

Psalm 103:8, 10-11 (NIV)

- There is no fear in love, because perfect love casts out fear... we love, because He first loved us.

1 John 4:18-19 (NIV)

- God’s love for you is constant, unconditional, infinite, undeserved and always seeking your highest and best interest.

- God’s love forgives our sin, removes our shame, heals our wounds, births new life, provides strength for today, hope for tomorrow, power to change, and peace to our souls!

- At this very moment, God deeply, passionately, loves and wants to help everyone you know!

Ask Yourself:
How will they know He loves them? Who will show them? Who will tell them?

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV)
How to discover your Spiritual Love Language:

1. Peter’s ___**direct**___ approach  
   - Strengths
   - Weaknesses
   - Personal Evaluation
     1  5  10
   
2. Paul’s ___**intellectual**___ approach  
   - Strengths
   - Weaknesses
   - Personal Evaluation
     1  5  10

3. Blind man’s ___**testimonial**___ approach  
   - Strengths
   - Weaknesses
   - Personal Evaluation
     1  5  10

Reference: *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy: Three Essential Books in One Volume*
4. Matthew’s **interpersonal** approach  
   - Strengths  
   - Weaknesses  
   - Personal Evaluation  
     -  
     -  
     -  
     1 5 10  
   Luke 5

5. Dorcas’ **service** approach  
   - Strengths  
   - Weaknesses  
   - Personal Evaluation  
     -  
     -  
     -  
     1 5 10  
   Acts 9

6. Samaritan woman’s **invitational** approach  
   - Strengths  
   - Weaknesses  
   - Personal Evaluation  
     -  
     -  
     -  
     1 5 10  
   John 4
7. Creative **arts** approach

The Concept: This approach seeks to cultivate one’s ability in music, art, drama, dance, sports, photography, etc., as a means to express and communicate the gospel in a culturally relevant manner.

1 Corinthians 10:31

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Personal Evaluation

| 1 | 5 | 10 |

**Discussion Questions:**

1. With which approach (or top 2) do you most identify?

2. How does learning that there are multiple approaches to sharing God’s love “free you” to be yourself?

3. Which of the 7 approaches are you most motivated to put into practice this week? When and how might you do this?

**Homework:**

Initiate one spiritually oriented conversation this week with someone who doesn’t know how loved they are by Christ.
Introduction: The Power of Story

- The greatest communicator in the world used story as His primary means of teaching.

  o Exhibit A: “Linda’s Story”

- Why is YOUR story so important?

  1. People are interested!

  2. People can relate to it!

  3. It’s not offensive or argumentative!

Question: So how do you tell it well?
How to share His love through your story:

Paul’s story - Acts 26

• B.C. - Before Christ
  Acts 26:4 - 11

• Conversion
  Acts 26:12 - 18

• A.D. - After Christ
  Acts 26:19 - 23
Your story – today:

B.C. - What was your life like before Christ?

• External Issues

• Internal Issues

• Realization of Your Need

✍ - How did you come to know Christ personally?

• What caused you to consider Christ as a solution to your needs?

• What motivated you to finally trust Christ?

• Be specific about where and how you actually put your faith in Christ.

• Key Verse:

A.D. - How did your life change after trusting Christ?

• External Issues

• Internal Issues

• Ongoing Struggles
Tips for preparing / sharing your testimony:

1. **Develop a theme:** The central issue in your life that shows the _contrast_ in your spiritual outlook before Christ and after.

2. **Outline:** Keep it _clear_ and _simple_.

3. **Conclusion:** End with a question or statement that requires a _response_.

4. **Scripture:** Think of the one verse that opened your eyes and share how it _impacted_ you.

5. **Length:** Be _brief_ and to the point.

6. **Attitude:** Share, don’t _preach_!

7. **Sensitivity:** Focus on the other person and share aspects of your life that relate to their _interests_ and _needs_.

8. **Focus:** Make Jesus the _star_ of your story.

**Discussion Questions / Homework:**

1. Why is knowing how to share your story so important?

2. What did you learn that was most helpful in sharing your faith story with someone else?

3. How might God use your taking the time to prepare an outline of your story to share with others?

4. What specifically will you do to prepare to tell others how Jesus has changed your life? When? Who will help you keep this commitment?

5. Write out a brief outline of your faith story that could be shared in 3-5 minutes.

Reference: *Becoming a Courageous Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg
Act 1: How it All Began

**Creation:** God made us for Himself – A perfect relationship in a perfect world, giving, and receiving perfect love.

**Love:** gives **_life_** that leads to **_relationship_**.

**The Result:** **_Purpose_** - Ephesians 2:10

Act 2: How it All Went Wrong

**The Fall:** God allowed us to choose or reject His love – Our choice to reject God’s love ushered in sin, death, and selfishness to every relationship, separating us from God, ourselves, and others.

**Love:** gives **_freedom_** that leads to **_consequences_**!

**The Result:** **_Separation_** - Romans 5:12
Act 3: How God’s Love Rescued Us

Redemption: Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.  
John 15:13 (NIV)

God, the Son, took on human flesh, lived a perfect life to reveal God’s heart, then offered His life as a sacrifice and payment for the sins of all people of all time; that whoever would choose to receive new life may have it.

Love: gives forgiveness that leads to peace!

The Result: Reconciliation - 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Act 4: How it All Will End

Restoration: Jesus will return as promised to make all things right in heaven and on earth forever.

Every moral being will be justly judged (repaid) for their thoughts, choices, and actions. Sin, death, and Satan will be vanquished forever, and God will re-establish perfect relationships in a perfect world, giving and receiving perfect love.

Love: gives hope that leads to perseverance!

The Result: Eternal Life - Revelation 21:1-5
Two Big Questions:

#1 – How do we know God’s story is true?

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:19-22 (NIV)

#2 – How do we receive God’s rescue?

The facts of the gospel:

1. You are a **sinner** - not perfect by God’s 100%, holy standard.
   
   ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
   
   Romans 3:23 (NAS)

2. **The penalty for sin is** **death = separation**.
   
   For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
   
   Romans 6:23 (NAS)

3. **Christ died to pay for** **your** **sin = substitution**.
   
   But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
   
   Romans 5:8 (NAS)

4. **You must personally receive Christ by by** **faith = your grateful response**.
   
   Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.
   
   John 1:12 (NAS)
A picture is worth a thousand words:

God’s Plan: The Good News is He’s provided a way

Discussion Questions:

1. What aspect of God’s “Love Story” is most intriguing to you? Why?

2. How do Easter and the Resurrection demonstrate God’s love for you?

3. Have you ever received Christ’s personal gift of salvation to cover your sins and give you eternal life? Where? When?

4. Is there anything keeping you from trusting Christ “right now” as your Savior and Lord?

5. Who could you talk with about experiencing God’s love in your life?