



## Getting the Word Out

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I wonder how Jesus would have gotten around spam filters. Or “no call” lists. Lately, they’ve been a thorn in my side. I put together an important email, chock full of key information, and hit “send” with eager anticipation. Crickets.

Surely the news I had to share was worthy of a response...some comment...some thumbs-up indication that it had been well received.

After two days of silence, I switched from asking whether the message had been well received, to asking whether it had been received at all. As I began inquiring, I found that, for most, my email was intercepted by their spam filters. For others it was significantly delayed. I didn’t even get my own email until a day-and-a-half later!

We have created tools to help drown out unwanted messages. Spam filters sort through the barrage of messages to weed out the junk. It feeds us what it thinks we need or want. There are ways to override the system and to identify an email address as a “trusted source.” It takes our proactive effort though. As a sender of an email that was considered junk, I need to now ask people to trust me and to instruct their computers to do the same.

And so I wonder about Jesus and how much of his message went to the spam filters of his day. What tools did people use to ignore the good news that he and his disciples tried to share? In the barrage of messages in their time, how did people sort through what was a trusted source?

A colleague recently shared a chapter from Henri Nouwen’s book *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, in which he wrote about a friendship with Fred, and how they challenged each other’s spiritual formation. At one point, Fred offered this advice when Nouwen felt he had no words of hope to offer the world, “Speak from that place in your heart where you are most yourself. Speak directly, simply, lovingly, gently and without any apologies. Tell us what you see and want us to see; tell us what you hear and want us to hear....Trust your own heart. The words will come. There is nothing to fear. Those who need you most will help you most....”

Not everyone will want to hear our message of Good News, and it doesn’t do anyone good to push it on them even more loudly or frequently. For others who are not yet ready to receive it, our message of hope might be delayed. That doesn’t diminish the need for us to share the news.

Our trusted source is the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we speak sincerely and authentically about what matters to us as Christians – when we speak from the heart – our good news can be heard above the din. Share your simple, loving, gentle, unapologetic story of faith: why being a Christian matters to you. As Nouwen was reassured: “The words will come. There is nothing to fear.” Trust that the words we speak are not junk destined for the spam file, but will be shared from generation to generation.