

Text: Various

Title: Personal Evangelism (Part 1)

Truth: Despite the challenges in evangelism, the Bible commands all believers to be making disciples by preaching the Gospel to the Lost.

Date/Location: October 9, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

The objective of this series on personal evangelism is to be better equipped to preach the Gospel, both in content and method. Let me add this disclaimer: there is not sure method to evangelism. In other words, no one method guarantees a 100% acceptance rate. In fact, we cannot guarantee that any method used will be effective, because it is not the method that is effective. Tet me be clear, it is the Spirit of God using the powerful Gospel message to bring them under conviction and cause them to respond in repentant faith in Jesus Christ. That said, for the Spirit to work, they must hear the Gospel (Rom 10:17) and have it preached to them with great clarity, and methods can help us clearly communicate the Gospel.

We all know someone that does not believe the Gospel or maybe they are believing in a false Gospel (e.g., prosperity gospel, social-justice gospel). Do you have a desire to see that person believe in Christ, be baptized, join the church, and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:18). I hope you do. For all this to happen, someone must tell them the good news—the Gospel of Christ Jesus (Rom 10:17).

As believers, we are ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor 5:20), and we are all responsible to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). This is not the sole responsibility of the Pastor (2 Tim 4:5), the deacon (Acts 21:8), the church planting missionary (Eph 4:11). It is every Christian's responsibility, and we are to take seriously our part in making Christ known. Perhaps you feel ill-equipped to evangelize? Do not let this keep you for sharing Christ. That is why we are doing this series, so that we are better equipped to share the Gospel to anyone at any moment.

I. Challenges in Evangelism

We would be lying if we did not admit that evangelism is challenging. Yes, there are believers who are gifted evangelists, and sharing the Gospel comes more naturally than others per se. However, there are challenges outside our control that make sharing the Gospel difficult. Outside the work of the Spirit, there is nothing that we can possibly do to overcome these external challenges.

External Challenges:

- The unbeliever's fundamental inability to embrace the things of God as the truth (1 Cor 2:14).
- The unbeliever's suppression of truth in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18)
- The unbeliever's darkened heart (Rom 1:21)
- Idolatry; evil passions/desires (Rom 1:22-23)
- Cults/False doctrines

There are internal challenges—challenges which originate in mind/heart of the presenter—that must be overcome if we are to be faithful in our witnessing.

Internal Challenges:

- Our sin nature
- Spiritual immaturity
- Lack of understanding of the Gospel/Bible
- Fear of objections and/or rejection
- Fear of suffering (e.g., persecution)
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Lack of prioritization

II. Wrong Methods to Evangelism

The short answer is, yes. There are methods or approaches that we should avoid because they do not reflect the biblical examples we see in the New Testament and/or are insufficient in their content.

- Scare tactics (e.g., telling someone that if they do not want to go to hell then they need to be saved)
- Impersonal evangelism (e.g., yelling, being insensitive, not letting them speak, not leaving when asked to)
- Pressuring young children for a decision (children will often responded favorably out of a desire to please their parents)
- Relationship evangelism (e.g., too much friendship and too little evangelism. Our conduct should match our words but conduct alone cannot bring about repentance (Cf. Rom 10:17)).
- Excluding “off-putting” and negative aspects of the Gospel (e.g., sin, guilt, punishment, repentance).

III. A Case Study in Acts 17

You may wonder where to begin when sharing the Gospel. Does a simple explanation of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 suffice? I would contend that the amount of information you provide depends on the audience and the amount of time that you have. Ideally, you will have multiple conversations with this person. These kinds of situations allow us to engage with the person more personally and be able to provide further explanation of the Gospel. On the other hand, if it is a stranger and you only have five minutes together on the bus, you will have to give a brief summation of the Gospel.

The amount of information you provide also depends on the person’s knowledge of the Bible. You may not be able to discern this if you just met the person, but if it a family member, friend, or a co-worker, you would likely have some idea of what they know about the Bible. That said, I would err on the side of caution, and don’t assume that they know as much as you think they may know. Are they Catholic? Jewish? Muslim? Do they read the Bible? Attend church? Did they grow up in a Christian home? Knowing these facts will help you know what biblical materials you should include in your conversations.

Let's examine Paul's preaching of the Gospel in Acts 17 to learn how his consideration of his audience's background and knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the Scriptures effected his presentation of the Gospel.

Read Acts 17:16-34.

Conclusion

We acknowledge the challenges of sharing the Gospel, the time of our busy lives that it requires, the necessity to know the Gospel, but it is commanded of us that we do it, and it is absolutely worth the time and effort. I hope that in the weeks ahead we all will become more equipped to share the Gospel with much clarity and boldness.

JDL