

The Sacrament of Evangelism

Sacramentalists speak of God being present in the Sacraments to mediate grace to others. If this is so, then Evangelism is, at that level, a sacrament. We do not take Jesus to anybody. He is already present and mediating grace to all. We go to make explicit what He is already doing implicitly to woo others to Himself. God is already at work. We want to discover in what way He is working and partner with Him as He is loving others into His Kingdom. This seminar looks at Evangelism as a work of God in which followers of Christ seek to participate.

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Evangelistic Fruitfulness

Text: Philemon 6

- A. Introduction: Dawson Trotman's "Born to Reproduce"
- B. Background to Philemon 6
- C. If you share Jesus you will grow. And your intimacy with Jesus will increase. There are various words in the NT for "knowledge" (oida, yinosko, episteme, sophia, epiginosko—the word that is used in Philemon 6) Note some of the ways we will grow:
 1. People will ask questions.
 - a. Testimony: Shaggy dog.
 - b. If I could lose it based on what I did I would have to gain it based on what I did. I never understood the cross or the grace of God in that context.
 - c. In college I heard the Gospel and I have never stopped being grateful. In fact, I thought everyone would want to know.
 - d. Boy was I surprised that people were asking questions I never thought about asking. But I felt, "If this is the only barrier between them and receptivity to the Gospel, I won't leave a stone unturned".
 - i. An aside, do not be afraid of the questions you can't answer. We should all have some level of doubt in our understanding of the things of faith, some ambiguities are bound to be present;

unless you've deluded yourself to think that you've achieved omniscience.

- ii. The dad of one of my students who asked: "So Jerry, how is your soul"? [Questions and the love of God is as naturally compatible as the questions asked by a child to the parent he knows loves him]
- iii. Do not be afraid of questions. None is very life-skilled...all of us are awkward. If you are not awkward someplace in your life you are just not growing.
- iv. When I started sharing my faith and people asked questions I started growing like a weed.

2. People will scrutinize your life.

a. The man who said, "I would never put a Christian bumper sticker on my car. If I did I would have to drive better".

b. Marsh Moyle, who works at England's L'Abri, said recently, "15 years ago young people came to L'Abri asking, 'Is it true'? Now they come asking, 'Is it real'?". People want to know is it real, is it authentic. They will look at your life and if they do not see consistency, that is an opportunity for you to grow.

i. Ask forgiveness for your failures—your ability to do so reveals that you have a degree of security in the love of Christ. It authenticates the message.

ii. If someone is bitter about having been hurt by others, stand in the gap as a surrogate.

- The father from Dresden.
- Gene on the streets of Wheaton.
- Please forgive us, I wouldn't want anything to stand between you and knowing how much Jesus loves you.

c. When you share your faith people scrutinize your life and you will grow.

3. You will see Jesus showing up in places you never expected.

a. Students say often enough, I just want to see Jesus showing up in my life.

b. Note: Walter Hansen's Story—"I knew the man for years at Church, but I never really got to know him until I got to know him at his work place". So too you can know God for years at Church but you will never really get to know Him (epiginosko) until you get to know Him in His work place.

D. Conclusion:

1. Where do you begin? Pray

2. Brad's story
3. Other stories:
 - a. Gene at the Donut shop
 - b. Mike the garbage guy
 - c. Steve the mailman
 - d. People in your world want to hear about Jesus. How do I know? Jesus said: "The fields are white unto harvest."

Further Practical Advice: Spiritual Formation & Gospel Conversations

Text: John 4

A. Cultivating spiritual conversations

1. Ask questions and begin with public things
2. Listen
3. Let the answers give you both the information and the permission to go deeper—trust the Holy Spirit to lead
 - a. Allegra in Vienna
 - b. Others
4. Look for the deeper felt need where the Spirit of Christ has already been at work
5. There are things that Peter Berger/Os Guinness call "Signals of Transcendence". Lewis notes three deep longings:
 - a. Pilgrim longing:
 - i. Lewis: "The mark of a literary person is he reads a book more than once..."
 - ii. Homesick in our homes (moving to Wheaton, and moving away: Kadoka)
 - iii. Jeremy in Dickens' *Great Expectations* "Dad, I just didn't want it to end.
 - b. Lover longing:
 - i. Dante's Beatrice
 - ii. The literature of first love
 - iii. I think the deepest significance is the awakening of longing for Ontological love. It can only be said of God, "God is love".
 - iv. Have you ever felt lonely before? What does that tell you of your nature? Have you ever felt lonely in a crowd? That fact doesn't prove anything but it may strongly suggest that you were made for a relationship no human relationship can satisfy.
 - c. Ascetic/Saint longing:

- i. Wordsworth's sadness as he aged and saw he was becoming somewhat jaded, calloused and hardened. He longed to be restored.
- ii. Wanting the brokenness fixed.
- iii. Hypocrisy question.
- iv. The woman at Hertford College, Oxford.

B. Jesus had some advantages but the principles are the same:

- 1. Begin with what is there
- 2. Awaken a sense of sin
- 3. Explain the Gospel
- 4. Allow for commitment

C. Conclusion: Follow-up

- 1. John 6:47; John 17:3; Matthew 13 and the Parable of the Sower. On this set up appointments.
- 2. Help them to know and love the Jesus of the Gospels. [Note first football win and Steve Wallace]. I was getting to know Him.
- 3. Word
- 4. Prayer
- 5. Fellowship
- 6. Stewardship
- 7. Service
- 8. Obedience
 - a. Sign of our love: "If you love me, obey me".
 - b. The splint God places on a broken life that it might mend.
 - c. MacDonald: "Obedience is the opener of eyes".
 - d. Obedience accesses for us all the benefits of Omniscience. We can live beyond our own capacities.
- 9. Witness. Illustration: Robert Millotti.

Suggested Readings:

ROOT, Jerry & Stan Guthrie, 2009. *The Sacrament of Evangelism*. Chicago: Moody Press.
 COLEMAN, Robert, 1994 (65th Printing). *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Revell/Baker Books.