

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Gospel Sharing – Part 1, The Big Picture

June 24, 2018

Plan / Purpose

To take one Sunday each month for the next 6 to focus on equipping in the “every-Christian” basics of Gospel Sharing, covering 6 main areas... (6/24, 7/22, 8/26, 9/23, 10/28, 11/25)

- I. Big Picture Perspective – calling, goal, types of evangelism, growth process, motive, etc.
- II. Personal Preparation – testimony, gospel truths, basic apologetics
- III. Conversation Mechanics - transitions, starters, what to expect, listening, closing
- IV. Conversation Types – family/friend/stranger, confrontive/questioning, 1x/ongoing
- V. Tools – tracts, props, websites, evangelistic bible studies, social media posts, etc.
- VI. Intentionality – crafting a strategy for specific individuals, creating opportunities, prayer, partnering, etc.

Reasons for heightened focus

We don't feel that we generally have allowed this area to receive sufficient space in our regular equipping, and many in our church are not regularly engaging in Gospel Sharing endeavors, perhaps due to a number of factors. We want to equip and encourage each member to move toward speaking of Jesus to others as a regular part of their daily walk.

I. BIG PICTURE PERSPECTIVE

1. **Evangelism is our Calling – Col 4:5-6, Phil 1:27, Acts 1:8**

The purpose we are left here on earth to glorify God by working out our own salvation by faith and dependence upon the Spirit as we daily are becoming conformed to the image of Christ, AND to be a witness to others of Christ so that they too might come to a saving knowledge of the truth. THUS...

a. Evangelism should be normal, not special

Though there are special individuals gifted as evangelists (Eph 4:11), who not only evangelize, but also equip others in the Body to evangelize (4:12), it should be the normal activity of all believers to be sharing the Gospel with others.

b. Evangelism should be regular, even if not daily

If we are defined as “My witnesses” (Acts 1:8) and our speech is “always to be with grace” (Col 4:6), then it follows that evangelism would be as regular to us as gathering for worship or loving one another (both of which we are also defined by). We ought to be asking ourselves whether this is in fact a regular part of our life.

2. **Evangelism is a Growth Area where Practice is needed – 2 Peter 3:18**

This is not something we should expect to be naturally good at or comfortable with right away. While not complicated, it is an area in which the more we practice, the easier it becomes (which means by definition it will feel a little awkward at times).

3. Evangelism is Hindered by Several Misconceptions

- a. *This should be easy / comfortable / natural...*
(if so, why did Paul ask for prayer for him in this regard – Col 4:2-4)
- b. *The Gospel should flow naturally out of regular conversations...*
Most unbelievers avoid earnest conversations about God – Rom 1:18; you are likely going to have to bring it up, even if by a sudden shift in the conversation – we are going to talk in August about conversation starters / transitions
- c. *If I am living well, it should make unbelievers “thirsty” and they will come and ask me questions about my faith...*
Possible, but rare – Rom 3:11; often we must specifically bring up challenging spiritual matters in a non-judgmental way
Note: Matt 5:16 / 1 Pet 2:12 speak of others *seeing our good deeds and glorifying our Father in heaven*. Our good works can “testify,” but not as clearly or as often as our lips can.
- d. *I have to be fully equipped / prepared before I share with anyone...*
If this was the case, the Philippians could not have been “participants” with Paul in Gospel endeavors from the “first day until now” (Phil 1:5), nor could have Paul called the Colossian church at large, including new believers, to do so (Col 4:5-6). We should continually grow in preparation, but if you know who Jesus is and what He did for you and how to respond to Him – such that you yourself are saved – then you can tell others that!
- e. *If I present the Gospel right, it should not offend anyone...*
On the contrary, the Gospel must confront one’s sinful state and ways for them to realize / embrace God’s remedy for their condition; thus it is natural for the Gospel to offend – 2 Cor 2:15-16, Col 1:21, 1 Thess 3:3-4. This is only heightened in our culture by a pervasive belief in relativism. Remember, the Gospel universally condemns, and exclusively saves.
- f. *I might drive someone further away from Jesus...*
This is poor theology – as long as you are being kind, respectful, and honest, you cannot drive them further from Christ. The Spirit is more powerful than anything, and if He is truly drawing this individual to Christ, even if your explanations are weak, the Spirit will continue to draw him – John 6:37,44, John 16:7-8, Rom 8:29-30.
- g. *There is a “right / best” method for sharing the Gospel...*
If so, which one is it...?
 - i. Way of the Master
 - ii. Evangelism Explosion
 - iii. Bill Bright, Bill Fay, Bill Graham
 - iv. Lifestyle Evangelism

Note: an approach that might work well on a college campus or a big city, might not be the best approach with your neighbor in Owasso – but it might! Beware of getting locked into one method – consider the context and the audience. But the bottom line is to be committed to sharing the truth with grace and clarity.

4. Evangelism is accomplished by Diverse Means

- a. Public – speaking to a group with a clear presentation of the truth (crusade, VBS, street preaching, businessman’s luncheon, funeral, wedding, worship gathering, etc.
- b. Private – one on one conversation with another individual

- c. Spoken – verbalizing (in one of the above ways)
- d. Written – in social media posts, letters, tracts, emails, articles sent, books, etc.

- e. Single Moment – a momentary opportunity with a stranger
- f. Ongoing Dialog – an ongoing conversation with a friend or family member

- g. Way of Life Opportunities – with the people you run across in stores, planes, parks, family reunions, lunches, business lulls, etc. Basically any time or place you are with other people and have a moment to talk.
- h. Created Opportunities – Gathering on Main, VBS, mission trips, door-to-door, street preaching, Evangelistic Bible Studies, invitations for lunch / dinner, etc.

We should make it our joy to be creatively pursuing any and all of these opportunities, and not pigeonhole Gospel sharing to one means or another.

5. Evangelism Takes Work – Col 1:28-29

Effort

- a. Learning the Gospel truths and Scripture passages
- b. Being watchful for opportunities
- c. Considering how to start and end the conversation
- d. Being mentally ready to navigate objections or opposition
- e. Actually taking the time to speak to others

Commitment

- a. Willing to put aside your own agenda
- b. Willing to initiate the conversation
- c. Willing to deal with any potential opposition or personal consequence

We ought not to think that Evangelism will come at no personal cost to us (2 Sam 24:24). Nor that the personal cost of Evangelism is rationale to shy away from it (2 Tim 2:10).

6. Evangelism's Motive

Wrong Motives

- a. *Conversion – my immediate “goal” for Gospel sharing is the person’s acceptance of it...*

This can lead to...

- i. Discouragement

When a person doesn't respond as you hope, and you begin to wonder what you did wrong and are inhibited from further evangelism.

- ii. Pragmatism

When you begin to soften or adjust the message so that the person is more likely to respond favorably to the “gospel” (and you!).

Conversion is not our business, but the Spirit's. We desire and pray for conversion in the person, but this is not our goal (see “Right Motives” below).

- b. *Guilt – to merely fulfill my duty as a Christian...*

Jesus is more interested in our heart, than in our help. If we are mechanically going through motions of evangelism from time to time because “I feel guilty for not doing so,” we need to seek to renew a vibrant relationship with Jesus. The Apostles testified that they “could not stop speaking about what they had seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Consider whether your heart is not desiring to speak about Jesus due to your own personal experience with Jesus (through His Word, prayer, and active faith) has waned to such an extent that there is little of Jesus that you are “seeing and hearing.” The more we are actively seeking to see Jesus as He really is, the more we will be being changed by the Spirit into His likeness (1 John 3:2-3, Rom 12:1-2), and the more we will fall at His feet ready to serve Him (John 20:26-29).

- c. *Pride – To gain honor from other Christians*

While we should often honestly speak of and pray over our labors in evangelism (to encourage our fellow Christians in the same), our motive for Gospel sharing should never be to gain glory in the eyes of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Right Motives

- a. *Honor – To glorify Christ by obeying Him, regardless of the personal cost...
“Jesus is more important to me than this person’s opinion of me” – Matt 10:37-38*
- b. *Compassion – To mercifully inform one of the Gospel truth and urge him toward a response (or to further pursue understanding) – 2 Cor 5:11-21, 2 Tim 2:10*
- c. *Delight – to participate with and serve Jesus and the Spirit in **their** work of bringing individuals to repentance and faith – John 3:29-30*