

Creating a Culture of Evangelism

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Evangelism is central to the work of Christians. The resurrected Lord commanded the apostles, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). When believers were expelled from Jerusalem, the Bible says, “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Have you ever noticed how teaching the Gospel almost came naturally to the first Christians? They were taught the Gospel. They were equipped with understanding and conviction. Rather than give up when persecution came, they remained committed to Christ and preached the word. It does not appear that evangelism was complicated or intimidating to these saints. Yet, this is not typically the case with us.

We are often intimidated by evangelism. Teaching the Gospel does not seem to come naturally to us. We might be willing to invite someone to church, but rarely will we speak personally about the implications of the cross of Jesus. Rather than analyze the reasons for this, we need to consider how to create a culture of evangelism within our congregation.

Features of an Evangelistic Culture

1). Not a three-step plan. The subject of evangelism has been over-complicated six ways to Sunday. We have all heard many different plans and methods of doing evangelism. Creating a culture of evangelism is not a three-step plan. It’s not even a four or five-step plan!

As Christians, reaching people with the Gospel must become part of our worldview. Our worldview will change only when our hearts change. People who have been genuinely transformed by the self-giving love of God will want nothing more than to share the Gospel with everyone!

2). The role of the local church. There are some dangerous misconceptions about the role of the local church in evangelism. The church serves the community by being a witness to Christ through worship. The Gospel is preached. The Scriptures are studied. People most certainly can be evangelized through the efforts of the local church. However, evangelism is not reserved for the assemblies of the local church.

Often, members of the local church expect the local church to evangelize. While evangelism does occur through our assemblies, this perspective is misguided. When Christians disconnect themselves from the work of evangelism, they have gone wrong. Evangelism is about Christians taking the Gospel *into* the world. When we exclusively think of evangelism as “the church’s responsibility,” we fail the basic mandate of evangelism: Go!

3). Grassroots effort. Evangelism is a grassroots effort. “Grassroots” is a term used to describe regular, ordinary people mobilizing with limited resources to advance a cause. This term

accurately describes what happened with the earliest Christians. They had few resources. They were not educated scholars or trained public speakers. They had faith and conviction. They had a simple message they shared everywhere they traveled.

4). The message. Evangelism has a clear message: the Gospel. The Gospel is about what God accomplished for us through Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-11). The message is about God's love and the forgiveness of our sins. The message is about the hope of eternal life.

The Gospel is about everything people are looking for today. People do not know who they are. Many have become disillusioned by the promise of the American Dream or the notion that money will bring them fulfillment. Others are crushed and defeated. They know they are sinners. They try to atone for their sins by doing good, but they cannot shake the terrifying feeling of condemnation. The Gospel addresses all of this and more.

The Gospel offers grace and mercy. The Gospel offers new life and a fresh start. The Gospel continues to resonate as good news! We simply need to share the news.

5). Sharing the news. When the Gospel was taught, there were two components to what was communicated. First, the facts of the Gospel were declared (Rom. 1:1-4). Throughout the New Testament, Christians informed people about the death and resurrection of Jesus. These events proved Jesus was the Son of God.

Secondly, Christians often spoke personally about how the Gospel changed them. The apostle Paul frequently talked about his life as a persecutor of Christians. He described himself as the chief sinner, yet God granted him mercy. He was evidence of what God could do with anyone who believed the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:12-16).

We may be effective in explaining the facts of the Gospel. We may not be as effective in speaking personally about how the Gospel has changed us. Personalizing the Gospel helps people personally recognize their need for the Gospel. Has the Gospel had a positive effect on our lives? Of course, the Gospel has had an overwhelmingly positive influence on our lives, our marriages, and our families. This positive change is most certainly worth communicating to someone hurting with sin.

6). Look for opportunities. If we understand our work as being part of a grassroots effort, we will be looking for opportunities to teach the Gospel. We will find those opportunities in casual conversations. We will find a way to steer our friends to Christ.

Or opportunities may surprise us. They might present themselves in an unanticipated interaction with someone at the store. By our reputation, someone might approach us with a spiritual concern. When opportunity knocks, we must be ready to answer.

Conclusion

As a church, we need to encourage one another to be more evangelistic. One article in Plain Path is not going to improve our culture any more than a sermon will. Nevertheless, the more we consider the subject the more likely we will become to make improvements.

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And Cannot Find Their Way

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