

## The Make-Up of Evangelism

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

When I studied media, advertising and marketing, one of the things we had to develop was a strategy. If we wanted to see a particular product, we needed to know who used it, and who could still be enticed to use it. We then needed to know what newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV channels, or other media they used, and when and how and how often. From there, we had to develop the idea, the actual ads.

Advertisers have strategies. When countries want to attack other countries they have a strategy. When surgeons have to do some kind of intricate surgery, they have a strategy. A strategy is what you do to achieve your goal. God has a goal of reconciling the world to Himself. He has already paid the price for that, by sacrificing Himself on the cross. But the strategy continues to be worked out today. What is God's strategy? To put it another way, what is God's plan of action for evangelism. How is this thing supposed to work? Some seem to think it is by turning our churches into mega-malls. Some seem to think it is by aping whatever Hollywood or the record industry does. Some seem to think it is by getting cheeky billboards. Some seem to think it is by getting prominent people to claim to be Christians. What does the Bible say is the strategy of evangelism? What is the make-up of evangelism? What are its biblical components?

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians. God has reconciled us. Believers are reconciled to God. Once reconciled, what does God do? He gives us the ministry of reconciliation. What does that mean? Verse 19- God is reconciling the world to Himself, not condemning them because of the sacrifice of Christ, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

If we have been reconciled, and we now have this ministry, this word of reconciliation, who are we taking it to? Those still unreconciled. That's what makes us ambassadors. We belong to another country, but we live in this one, representing its interests. So evangelism is simply this: *truly converted people, deliberately interacting with unbelievers, so as to expose them to the truth of the gospel.*

## Truly Converted People

God's plan of evangelism is to use the people He saves as first-hand witnesses. It is really a brilliant plan. After all, sinners may or may not believe the witness of an angel. Angels don't need to be saved. Angels don't face human suffering. And above all God's angels are not sinners. They have never felt guilty. They have never felt corruption. They have never felt condemned. Hearing the gospel from the lips of an angel might well be compelling, but it may also be unconvincing to sinners.

For grace to be grace, it has to stoop down and get in there where the need is. So God does not set up a beacon on Mount Everest and call people to come up to it. He saves individuals, and leaves them on earth to tell other people of their transformation. By the way, that is why the local church is not supposed to be an unbeliever's first contact with the gospel. It may happen that way. However, the church is actually the 'called out assembly'. The word for church in the original language,

*ekklesia*, carries the word *eklektos* which means elect, in it. The church is the gathering of the chosen ones. It is the assembling; the congregating of those whom God has called and opened their eyes. Church is not supposed to be a big consumer-oriented, entertainment-driven, completely accessible experience for unbelievers. The church is for people who have already believed; for people who want to worship Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, who do not have to be convinced to love the Word, and His people, who love the Christian tradition handed down to us for 2000 years, who love getting into the Word and studying it, even when it is not a 10 step program to make my lifestyle more enjoyable. If the primary means of evangelism is our church services, then we are going about it the completely wrong way.

You can search the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation and you will never find that the local church's corporate worship services are supposed to be attractive, interesting, refreshing and altogether enjoyed by unbelievers. Evangelism is not what we do on Sunday mornings, though it may sometimes happen. Evangelism is what happens the moment every one of us walks out that door.

Didn't you ever wonder why God doesn't just take us to heaven the moment we get saved? Certainly, there are other reasons. We are not spiritually mature the day we get saved. Our love for Christ, while stirring and overwhelming, is still an immature love. There are many things that are only learned through suffering. Likeness to Christ sometimes only comes through many falls, many trials and much pain. And that is God's will for us. But apart from those reasons, God leaves us on earth to be in touch with other people, who can also hear the gospel from us. We saw last week that conversion is a miracle, but it is a miracle which God does through human means. His appointed means is to save sinners, and then let them proclaim His gospel message, upon which he chooses to save more sinners.

Why do I say, "Truly converted people"? Because you have to have experienced this and be experiencing it to be a proper witness. Now I know that God has seen fit to use unbelievers to share the gospel, and people have been saved. God can use whatever He wants. But for the most part, the gospel witness is done by people who were dead and are now alive, people who were blind, but now see.

A true believer understands the content of the gospel. You may know more or less doctrine than the next Christian, but you know enough to be able to tell someone what you believed. After all, when you believed, you believed *something*. Someone told you certain truths about God, about yourself, about sin, and hell, and Christ, and His cross, and the need to repent and receive Him. In other words, you heard some doctrine, some teaching. If you didn't, and you think you are saved, I'd encourage you to reconsider. The gospel is irreducibly doctrinal. The gospel is news, it is teaching about God and Christ and you that when believed saves you. And you may have learnt nothing else about anything in the Bible, and on the day you trust Christ you are able to be a witness of that to someone else. Now you'll hopefully grow in your understanding of that enormous event called the Atonement, and of this marvellous thing called your salvation. But a new-born believer can tell others what he or she believed.

A true believer has the power to live out the gospel.

*Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*

It is possible to profess with the mouth, but to deny with the life. More damage is done to the cause of Christ by those who claim the title Christian, but live like the unregenerate. They call Him Lord,

Lord, but do not do the things He says.

E. Stanley Jones, the great Methodist evangelist and missionary to India, once asked Mahatma Gandhi why he didn't become a Christian. Gandhi's reply was, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

**Matthew 5:13-16** *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.* <sup>14</sup> ¶ *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.* <sup>15</sup> *"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.* <sup>16</sup> *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

These are some of the best-known verses in the entire Bible. But what do they mean? They summarize God's strategy of evangelism: God makes a difference in your life, so that you can make a difference in others'. God changes you, so you can be an instrument of change. That's the idea with both salt and light. Salt adds flavour. It makes a difference. If it is no different, it is useless. Light enables people to see and to navigate in the dark. If a light is covered up, it is no light at all. Here's the idea: if you are no different to the people around you, what is it that you are offering? What do you have to draw them to you, like a light in the darkness? What do you have to add flavour or meaning to their empty lives.

Don't let all the false professors discourage you. One inexplicable life speaks louder than all the hypocrites put together. One life that is remarkably different, transformed, rooted to a new satisfaction, filled with peace and joy, will stop the mouth of every critical atheist or anti-Christian.

**Philippians 2:14-15** *Do all things without complaining and disputing,* <sup>15</sup> *that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*

### **Deliberately Interacting With Unbelievers**

When we study the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, and the acts of the apostles, we find that they did not merely bump into unsaved people; they were deliberate and calculating in their attempts to speak with them. They were soul-hunters. They were fishers of men. If you want to catch fish, you deliberately go to where the fish are. If you want to hunt, you go where the animals are. Jesus and His apostles went looking for people.

**John 4:4-8** *But He needed to go through Samaria.* <sup>5</sup> *So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.* <sup>6</sup> *Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.* <sup>7</sup> ¶ *A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."* <sup>8</sup> *For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.*

Now understand something about verse 4. It says He needed to go through Samaria. Why did He need to go through Samaria? Samaria was in between north and south Judea, but most Jews went around it. Most Jews refused to cross it. So when Jesus needs to go through it, what could the reason be? A Samaritan woman, whom He knows will sneak out during this odd time of day, to be alone at the well and draw water. And Jesus wants to be in Samaria, in this town, at that well when she is there, to talk to her about salvation. And because of her witness, many others come and believe in Jesus Christ.

*Luke 19:1-10 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. <sup>2</sup> Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." <sup>6</sup> So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; <sup>10</sup> "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Jesus is a seeker. He seeks souls. He sought out Zacchaeus. He was deliberate.

Look at Paul's example:

*Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.*

*Acts 17:1-2 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*

*Acts 17:16-17 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.*

*Acts 19:8-9 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.*

Paul went looking for people. We need to do the same thing.

Why do you think Jesus seeks sinners out? The answer is that sinners don't by nature seek Him out.

*Romans 3:11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

Why must you deliberately interact with unbelievers? Because they will not come by themselves. "I'm just waiting to see if someone might not come up to me and ask about Jesus." They might, but while you are waiting, why don't you start thinking of ways to interact with people. Some of it happens naturally. You're at work; you've got to interact with them. You've got to pay your bills, buy your groceries, put petrol in the car. You've got to go to the hospital, go to the gym, and get the car fixed. You've got to see the family and have meals with them. Unless you're completely housebound by reason of health, you have to interact with unbelievers.

On the other hand, there is also something to be said for getting deliberate. A lot of the circumstances I just mentioned don't provide extended opportunities for you to talk to people, and for them to talk to you and observe you. A lot of what we do is quick, on-the-go stuff, where all we're trying to do is get stuff done. But the example of Jesus and the apostles tells us that love for our neighbours means deliberately seeking them out. It is thinking of ways to be able to interact

with unbelievers on a more than random basis.

Let me give you some ideas, and you can possibly add to this list.

- \* Do some of your shopping at the same store, maybe a smaller shop, where the store owner gets to know your face, and conversations become more likely. Moms, try to arrange a time when you could pop in without the kids, during a less busy time.
- \* If you are able to take walks in your neighbourhood, walk the same route, and greet some of the neighbours you might come across. A regular presence and a friendly greeting sometimes turn into a bigger opportunity.
- \* Speaking of neighbours, try to get to know your immediate neighbours. Do them some favours. Have them over for a meal.
- \* If your children have made friends at school or somewhere else, and you're fairly sure their parents aren't saved, invite them all over for birthday parties. Attend your children's extra-mural events when you can. That is a great opportunity to interact with others.
- \* If you have a particular interest or a hobby that could connect you with groups of people, go ahead and join up. Unbelievers need to meet Christians, who enjoy horseback riding, and stamp-collecting, and model aeroplane flying, and indoor cricket, and amateur astronomy, and Thai cooking, and archery, and bonsai care, and dog training. You get to do the thing you enjoy, and yet get to know unbelievers, who get to know you, which is the most important part.
- \* Read your local newspaper and see what's going on. Sometimes there are events, lectures, talks, which you could attend. If it is something you're interested in, you might start seeing some of the same people.
- \* Think of ways to be a blessing to some of the community services around you – your local police station, fire-station, hospital. Certainly, people work in shifts there, but if you show up from time to time to offer help, to give a word or a note or a gift of appreciation, you will probably open up some doors.
- \* There are still some of the retirement villages and centres where we are connected, where we can meet people and get into their homes and get to know them, and let them know us.

This is what it means to be mission-minded. You are in the world, not of it, but you are in it. And being in it, you do not exclude yourself from its people. Yes, we separate from worldliness. Yes, there are places we do not go. There are situations that Christians should avoid. But we are not to be cloistered up alone, trying to avoid contact with unbelievers. We must contact them. Yes, we cannot always enjoy deep fellowship with them. But in love, we must interact with them - deliberately.

### **So As To Expose Them To The Truth Of The Gospel**

If it were about spending time with the people we have the most in common with, we would only spend time with other believers. After all, even though we are different, when we have Christ, we have more in common than all the things in the world.

But we are not here to merely enjoy fellowship with each other. We will have all eternity to do that. Love means we spend time with unbelievers, not because we crave their presence, but because we have something they need. We have the gospel, without which they will die and go to hell. There is no other hope for their lives now and for all eternity. We have the only key, and it is only loving to try to get to know people well enough that they would allow you to share that with them. You see, there is something out there called friendship evangelism. If what you mean by friendship evangelism is, get to know people, so that you at some point have an opportunity to share the gospel, then I'm all for it, and it is what we just described. But what is usually meant is that you just make friends with people and never aim to bring up the gospel at all. You will just go about your

life, and do your own thing, and hopefully, someday, they will ask you about heaven and hell. That is not Scriptural. We just saw, there is none who seeks after God. Unless you seek their soul, they will not seek out salvation.

Your goal in deliberately interacting with unbelievers is that it would open up an opportunity to give them the living water. Your example alone cannot save anyone. Your love alone cannot save anyone. The Bible is clear about how people are saved.

*Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

At some point, the idea is to expose them to the truths of the gospel. Whether you tell them, or give them something to listen to, or read or watch, you want to get the chance to expose them to the Word which does the saving work.

That's why Paul says, *Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

How will that work? Different situations will have different ways. Sometimes, it may be that one day, the conversation just flies right open into matters of eternity, God, morality, Jesus, salvation, faith, religion. Sometimes, it may be that the person becomes interested in you. You become a curiosity to them. They want to know what makes you tick? They will ask you for a reason for the hope that lies within. And then you tell them. Sometimes it may be that they open up to you about the problems in their lives – marriage, finances, depression, and bitterness. They have begun to trust you, and are looking for some kind of counsel. Sometimes, it may be that you feel led to simply challenge them about the state of their soul.

It is not that you will get to share the plan of salvation at first, or even tell all of it on one occasion. But if you are showing genuine love, with a Christian example, and are praying for them, the time may come where they will listen to the actual gospel message from your lips.

Now there is an opposite error, which I don't think anyone here suffers from, and it is the idea that you are not an obedient Christian unless you have brought up the plan of salvation to every human being you meet on nearly every occasion you meet them. In this day and age, you do that, and many people will avoid you. Not only does that become obnoxious to people, it comes across as unnatural. They wonder if you are a normal person who thinks about anything else. And I'm not insulting the ability of some to talk about the gospel with nearly everyone they meet in a natural way. That's wonderful. Don't stop. What I'm saying is, don't be the kind of person who doesn't realise that he or she has become a nag. You have become a pest.

*Proverbs 25:17 Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.*

The gospel is going to offend. No amount of friendship and kind interaction will take away its offence. We are not trying to minimise the offence of the cross. We are simply trying to get close enough to unbelievers to expose them to the truth and let God do the work. The gospel will offend. But don't be a pest or a nag. Let your witness be winsome.

*Colossians 4:5-6 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

Evangelism is made up of truly converted people, who deliberately interact with unconverted people so as to expose them to the truth of the gospel. What about the results? Those are up to God?

What about making converts? God makes converts. What about saving people from hell. God saves people from hell. Your job and my job are to so know Christ, so that you desire to make Him known to those who don't. And to that end, while you live your life of working, eating sleeping, parenting, exercising, driving – you aim to interact with unbelievers, so that they can at some point come into contact with the truth that changed your life.