

True Calling: *Evangelism and the Message of Discipleship – Part 2*

“...pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, **to declare the mystery of Christ.**”
Colossians 4:3

Introduction: “Ok, we’re convinced that if all of life is about the glory of God and thus our goal is to see the nations enjoy the glory of God, which necessitates making disciples and evangelizing: *HOW DO WE DO IT???!!!*” In an ideal world the answer to that question would be as simple as: “how do you share with people whom you love about what matters to you most. Explaining your favorite team, or how your kids are doing, or that you met the man of your dreams.”. If someone we care deeply for had a near death experience but was rescued in an inexplicable way, we would have no problem sharing that with others. But often when it comes to the gospel, we get a case of temporary paralysis.

Now, to combat such numbness, the modern church has come up with strategies for evangelism: **service evangelism** (popularized by Steve Sjogren’s book, “Conspiracy of Kindness”), which seeks to differentiate ourselves through thoughtful acts that lead to gospel conversations. **Events** aimed at sharing with crowds, **neighborhood** which knocks on doors in neighborhoods, **street preaching** where someone sets up on a busy corner and preaches to unknown crowds, **tract drops**, where the gospel message is printed in a pamphlet and left for someone to hopefully read, and **chat room apologetics**, where people use the internet to interact with people in virtual chats. Now, I have opinions on each of these, most of which aren’t too excited at these methods, but also want to acknowledge that people like **Hudson Taylor** was saved by picking up a tract from a pile of pamphlets and God brought him to salvation as a result. Whether you have tried or currently use one of these methods or not, our goal is NOT to put forward a method but rather a set of Biblical principles to live out. A set of **principles of evangelism** are:

- **Evangelism** is more about a holistic lifestyle, not an event
- **Evangelism** is about people and relationships, not programs
- **Evangelism** is an issue of obedience, not manipulation
- **Evangelism** involves *declaring*, not just *showing* – There is a misnomer in stating “share the gospel and when necessary, use words” – a quote wrongly attributed to St. Francis of Assisi and unintentionally confuses what the gospel is. The gospel IS lived out in practice, but it IS ALSO a set of words and sentences that must be communicated to be understood.
- **Evangelism** is a mindset, not a script
- **Evangelism** is God-centered, not man centered, since the whole universe is about God’s glory, not our own.

These principles are not intended to limit creative practices, but they also drive us to Scripture to evaluate our **goals AND our methods**. Our hope is that in bringing Biblical clarity we will all engage obediently and joyously in sharing the best news given to mankind that has already radically changed our life.

The Mission of Evangelism: *The Glory of God in all the Earth*

The Motivation behind Evangelism: *Obedience to God’s Command*

The Mandate for Evangelism: *Make Disciples*

The **Program** God left for Making Disciples: Through Personal Relationships

Relational

The focus of this is on current spheres of influence, including family members, neighbors, co-workers, friends, and people in the community that we have regular contact with.

A. Live a Transformed life (Romans 12:1-2)

What influence are you in your home, neighborhood, and workplace? What testimony do you have? Are you a blessing to those around you and would how you live be consistent with the message you gave?

The most eloquent and fluid gospel presentation is ineffective if unbelievers identify you by the patterns of sin in your life (temper, gossip, laziness, anger, lust, bitterness, complaint, etc.). The example we set lays the groundwork for the gospel we present. There should be distinction in **attitude** as well as **action**, making sure we own our sin when it is committed.

The consistent example of a changed life is compelling proof of salvation. There is no greater program or preparation for us than to live a life that exemplified the gospel.

B. Pray Relentlessly – the neglected aspect – We are most effective as a church when we are the most prayerful as a people

- We pray for the people we share the gospel with (Rom. 10:1)
- We pray for hope in God's sovereignty and boldness in our witness (Acts 4:23-31)
- We pray for each other, that we will stand, be holy, and proclaim the mysteries of the gospel in any and every context (Eph. 6:19-20)
- We pray that God may open doors for the word, for each of us to declare the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:2-4)
- We pray that God would lift the veil on blind eyes to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:1-7)

C. Rely on the Holy Spirit to convict and draw

John 16:8 – "And He, when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

D. Have the proper expectation

Based on our study of the nature of man, we share expectantly, but understanding that we are speaking to dead people (Eph. 2:1) who's hearts are desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), who have blinded minds (2 Cor. 4:3-4), defiled minds (Tit. 1:15), and seared consciences (1 Tim. 4:1-3). We judge effectiveness not as much on the response but on the obedience to declare.

E. Use the church

Use the resources of people to aid our work in evangelism, both through **prayer** and **service**. When someone bows the knee to Jesus Christ, we are the instrument and conduit that God will use to both **connect** them into the church and begin the discipleship process.

The **People** God left for Making Disciples

The question is often asked, “How do I bridge the conversation from the ordinary and mundane to the truth of the gospel?” Fortunately, there is not a single way that fits every situation, but there are principles we can glean from the way **Jesus, Paul, Peter, and Philip** engaged people with the gospel.

Jesus interacting with the rich ruler (Matt. 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)

Jesus Himself gave us a clear example of evangelism as He was **approached** by a Jewish, rich, young ruler **asking** the key question, “*What good (or good deed) must I do to have eternal life?*” This is the dream scenario for anyone sharing the gospel. Yet, this man went away disappointed, since he was looking to **add** Jesus to his portfolio, did NOT believe he was a sinner (*I have kept the Law!*), and was NOT willing to give up his wealth to follow Jesus. This shows that a successful encounter does NOT have to lead to conversion, since that timing is up to the Spirit alone.

Peter & John on the way to the temple (Acts 3:1-26)

Peter and John were able to share the gospel among **normal activities**, like going to the Temple at normal hours to pray, along with all other observant Jews. On their way, they were able to help/heal a lame beggar, which allowed them to share the message of **repentance** (3:19) with the larger crowd. They shared the gospel in the rhythm of normal life and were willing to take care of physical needs as a means to share about spiritual ones.

Peter and John before the social leaders (Acts 4:1-22)

After healing the crippled man, Peter and John were proclaiming the explicit message of **Jesus and His resurrection from the dead** (4:2). This necessitated them being brought before the Jewish courts, where they continued to tell of salvation in no one else but Jesus, bringing astonishment from the religious leaders, who were befuddled by their **boldness coming from uneducated and common men**. They were trained by Jesus but had not **formal training, yet astonished** all who heard. Evangelism is designed to be done by ALL who know Jesus, not only the formally trained.

Philip interacting with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

In a supernatural encounter, **Philip** was directed by an angel and the Holy Spirit to meet with an Ethiopian eunuch, a treasury court official for the queen. As Philip encountered this distinguished man, he was reading from **Isaiah 53**, and asked Philip to explain it, and who the prophecy was about, to which Philip explained **from Scripture the good news of Jesus**, resulting in the man’s belief and baptism. After this, Philip was “carried away” to Azotus to continue preaching the gospel. Now the supernatural parts cannot be replicated today, but **2 principles stand out**. **1)** It was the Spirit that prepared the hearer of the gospel, which is still true today, **2)** Philip knew the Scripture well enough to start from Isaiah and explain the Person and work of Jesus, which is still effective today.

Paul interacting in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

Acts 17 stands out as a masterclass by Paul in how to interact with different people groups with the gospel. In the beginning of the chapter, Paul shared in the **synagogue** with the **Jews** in Thessalonica, and he “**reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead** (17:3). This created quite a stir and some of the Jews and many

devout Greeks and leading women *were persuaded*. This shows that the Scripture is central to persuasion, and the message must focus on Christ and the resurrection.

At the conclusion of the chapter, Paul was in **Athens**, a city that was *full of idols*. Rather than going to a synagogue, he instead planted himself at the cultural center on **Mars Hill** (or *Areopagus*) where he again **preached Jesus and the resurrection** (17:18), but instead of **starting** with the Scriptures he first proved the existence of God (17:24) and reasoned from their own philosophers and beliefs. Paul knew Scripture backward and forward, but also was conversant with cultural thought and teaching, and could bring those to bear in a discussion. At the message of **repentance in light of judgment and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead**, *some mocked, some wanted to hear more, and some joined and believed*. This reminds us that the starting point can be varied, but getting to the reality of sin, judgment, repentance, and belief in a resurrected Jesus is the goal. Also, the varied response is a fair microcosm of reactions we can expect.

Paul interacting with Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32)

Finally, we see Paul after he had appealed to Caesar while in prison (Acts 25:11), giving a defense of his ministry before King Agrippa. He used the opportunity to share his own personal story of salvation, what we call a testimony, to not only show he had done nothing to disparage the government, but also to show the power of God in salvation. Often when people share their testimony it can too easily get turned back to themselves and glorying in what happened **to them**, but Paul never did that. Instead, he turned it into a call to **repentance**: *“that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance...so I stand here testifying...that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”* (26:20, 22, 23). It was at these words that Agrippa said, *“In a short time would you **persuade me** to be a Christian?”* (26:28). Persuasion is NOT manipulation, but speaking with conviction about the things that are true. Paul often used his own experience as a springboard into the message of the gospel and a call to repent. A testimony ALONE is not proclaiming the gospel; it must be followed with a call to respond.

So we see that **evangelism** does not fit into any one system or structure, but was willing to respond to people who asked, were in need, were asking questions about the universe, or before and government hearing. The gospel was shared from the Law, Prophets, the entirety of the OT, and starting with philosophy of the day. It was done by Jesus, fishermen, commoners, those with upper level education and those with very little. However, each brought **clarity and boldness, and were willing to share a message that was mocked and caused persecution**. Remember, the gospel is OFFENSIVE by nature – YOU have offended a holy God and deserve punishment by His WRATH – but we strive not to add needlessly to the offense. We can be **creative**, but we can also use everyday relationships in everyday situations when we are ready to share.

The final question to remember this morning: ***what do I have to give in order for someone truly to understand the gospel?*** Here are four areas to cover when sharing:

The Message Given in Evangelism: *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*

Who is God?

Understanding the Nature of God:

He is **Holy & Perfect** (1 Peter 1:14-16; Matthew 5:48; Leviticus 11:44)
He is **Almighty & Sovereign** (Romans 1:20; 8:28-29; Col. 1:16-20; Isa. 46:9-11)
He is **Just** (1 Peter 3:18)
He is **Creator** and yet **personal** (Colossians 1:16-17)
He is **Merciful** (John 1:14) and full of **compassion** (Psalm 145)
He **Loves** the world (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; 4:8-10)

What He demands:

Perfection from people (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:14-16); meaning even the slightest of sin created separation from him

Absolute **glory** (Rom. 3:23), meaning He deserved all the praise from every person, and He will not share His glory with another (Isa. 45:5-7; 48:9-11)

Perfect **Worship**, meaning not only to obey fully, but to delight, fear, and serve Him (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Psalms 16:11; 73:25-26; Col. 1:16-18)

Perfect **Love**, to love God with all our being (Matthew 22:37-40; Exodus 20:3-5)

Who is Man?

The Problem of our Sin Nature and status being born into sin:

Born with a **sin nature** (Romans 5:12, 18; Genesis 3:1-7)
Man has violated God's holiness and glory, which defines his sin (Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:10, Ephesians 2:1-3)
Sin **separated** us from God (Genesis 3:8-24; Titus 3:3) and man is **unable** to choose God, since he is dead in sin (Romans 3:10-18) – and Dead Men Tell No Tales

His Consequence:

He is **condemned** under the **wrath of God** because of His deeds of sin (Romans 1:18; 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15)
He is **condemned to eternal judgment** in hell (Romans 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:10; Hebrews 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15)
He is **unable** to pay his debt of sin or do **anything** to save himself (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 2:2-3)

God's Loving Answer: Jesus Christ

Who He is and what He did:

He is both **fully God** and **fully man** (Phil. 2:5-11, Mark 10:45; Col. 2:9)
He was born **without a sin nature**, since He was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
He lived a **completely** holy and righteous life on this earth (2 Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 4:15)
He died a perfect, **substitutionary death to satisfy God's wrath** (Romans 3 & 4; 2 Cor. 5:17-21), meaning God's wrath was satisfied and His righteousness was applied to us

He **rose again** to conquer sin and death (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

What He offers man:

Offers **reconciliation** to God the Father through faith in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19-19; Romans 10:13; Acts 17:30-31)

Offers the **opportunity to worship God** through Him (John 4:23)

Offers **forgiveness** of sin and eternal rest in Heaven (Col. 2:13; John 14:1-6; Acts 4:12)

Offers **justification** before God since He took our place (Romans 3:24-26)

Man's Response: Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

Believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which means a total trust and abandonment to the Gospel (Acts 16:31; John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10)

Man must **repent** of his sin, which means a turning from worshiping anything other than God and worshipping God alone (Acts 2:31; 3:19; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 1 Thess. 1:9-10)

Belief and repentance leads to loving and joyful **obedience** to God (John 14:21; Phil. 3:9; Acts 11:8; 2 Cor. 5:15; 2 Tim. 2:25-26)

We now **live** for God with a whole heart, and become witnesses for Him to this world (Eph. 2:10; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Rom. 6:23) and **follow** Him by denying ourselves (Luke 9:23)

GOD ----- MAN ----- CHRIST ----- RESPONSE

This is not a formula but rather guiderails and posts that help steer the conversation. This is also our key to worship, both corporately and individually. If we remember who God is, then we remember who we are and are brought low, having our sin exposed. But then we look to Christ and see that our sin has been forgiven, we have been made sons and daughters, that our sin is remembered no more and that Christ is our Advocate. When we see Christ, our response is NOT earning or merit, but joy and thankfulness, leading us to worship and praise. The reason that we practice this in our own lives is so we are ready to share it with others, from any and every starting point, to explain what the actual gospel is and how someone believes it and is saved.

Our hope for Grace Church is not necessarily starting a new program or coming out with a new video to reach the world. It is to glorify God by being satisfied in Him through Christ, to increase our joy and hope that more and more would taste of His goodness. That **in the midst of hectic and busy, raising kids and chasing grandkids, and working hard at all responsibilities we have, to:**

Colossians 4:1-4 – *“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”*

Strong affections for God which breeds proper motivation to think about others, not ourselves, in order to pray that God would open doors, so we can speak, so He can save.