

“Effectively Communicating Christ!”

Acts 17:16-34

Intro. – Peter Drucker, often called the “the father of American management,” claims that 60% of all management problems are a result of faulty communications. A leading marriage counselor says that at least half of all divorces result from faulty communications between spouses. Criminologists tell us that upwards of 90% of all criminals have difficulty communicating properly with other people.

With this in mind, every Christian has the responsibility of communicating to those about them what Jesus means to him/her. All of us need to be as effective in that communicating as we can. James Dobson writes of the time he saw a sign on a convent in southern California which said: “Absolutely No Trespassing – Violators Will Be Prosecuted to the Fullest Extent of the Law. Signed, ‘The Sisters of Mercy.’”

Two farmers were chatting in front of the bank. “I hear you made \$60,000 in alfalfa.” Said the first farmer. Not wanting to be impolite his friend replied, “Well, that isn’t quite right. It wasn’t me, it was my brother, it wasn’t alfalfa, but oats; and it wasn’t \$60,000 it was \$6,000; and he didn’t make it he lost it.”

Again I ask, are we communicating Christ effectively? Paul was a communicator not only in what he wrote, but also in what he spoke. A good example of this is out text. He was in Athens, the cultural center of the world then. Athens was the “university town” where philosophers, intellectuals and students would gather for intellectual discussions. It was a tourist trap with a 60,000 seat stadium. But sad thing about Athens, it was a thoroughly pagan city. As many as 30,000 statues were erected as idols to various gods the time Paul visited. He toured this “impressive” city and thought more about the need to communicate Christ than seeing the sights.

Purpose: to look at four qualities needed to be an effective communicator for Christ

I With Solid CONVICTIONS

- you know what convictions are? = passion, fervor, beliefs that will not be shaken – Illus. conviction is what enables you to believe refrigerator light really goes out when you close the door.
- J. Wesley: “Give me 100 men who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God and I will shake the world.”
- Apostle Paul had solid convictions – something we too must have:

A. Athens Needed Christ

1. More than anything else, Paul believed the people of Athens needed Jesus Christ!
2. This explains 17:16 “*greatly distressed*” (NIV) or “*provoked in spirit*” (NASB) Gr. Word = *παροκυνω* = “incite or stir up” – Illus. – news media *parokuno* me quite often...
3. Seeing Athens filled with idols, Paul was firmly convicted Athens, above everything, needed X!

B. This Area Needs Christ

1. Let me preface what I’m about to say with the following: this community and surrounding areas are pleasant places in which to live... generally speaking the people are pleasant, moral people...
2. Facts, however, make following clear – Eaton/surrounding areas ARE NOT SOLD OUT TO X!
 - a. within blocks church building, marriages and homes in total disarray...
 - b. on given Sunday, majority of population NOT assembled in any church building, let alone a Bible believing/practicing local church.
 - c. peoples’ priorities reflect it all... e.g. many *good* things (schools, sport, 4H, jobs hobbies etc.) BUT, *the best* (most important being Christ and His Church) relegated to the back burner!
3. I ask, do we really believe this area needs Christ above everything else?
4. It has been said that *intensity* is the first important ingredient to being a good communicator – i.e. you have to be convicted of what you’re selling before you can really sell it!
 - Illus. – sign Kroger warehouse: “Salesmen, before you try to sell your product to us, be so convinced of its superiority that when you’re finished, we will be more anxious to buy it than you are to sell it.”
5. Point: if we’re going to effectively communicate Christ to this area, we must be intense in the conviction that this area needs *nothing* more important than Christ and His Church!

6. I pray more Christians will have solid convictions – that we would be like Jeremiah who wrote under God’s inspiration Jeremiah 20:9 “*His Word is in my heart like a burning fire...*”

This will enable you and me to be more effective in our communicating Christ in this area!

II With Passionate AWARENESS

- an effective communicator must have a *knowledge* an *awareness* to communicate:

A. Awareness of the Audience

1. Communicator must begin where his audience/people are; e.g. I’ll speak differently to a group of preachers than I would to Jr.Sr High Bible School class:
 - a. Paul reasoned with Jews in Synagogue on the Sabbath...
 - b. in the market place during the week days...
2. Communicator must use opportunities:
 - a. Paul taken to Areopagus = high court also referred to as *Mars Hill*
 - b. said he was bringing strange things to their ears and wanted to know what it meant (v 20)
 - c. though in the *limelight*, Paul was at home with these intellects because he had such a passionate awareness what and how these people thought...
3. If going to be a persuasive communicator = must know audience!
 - a. sin is attractive (Heb 11:25) = fact is people are attracted to sin
 - b. people are slaves to sin (self); thus, struggle is not with flesh and blood...
 - c. people want what they want and not what they need...

B. Awareness of the Subject Matter

1. To know the audience takes observation... to know the subject takes preparation...
2. To grow in grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:a8) is making ourselves aware of the subject matter so vitally important:
 - Illus. – 3 questions asked over the phone: 1) Do you believe there are Christians outside Christian Churches/Churches of Christ? 2) Do you believe the Lord is using Promise Keepers and “Christian” Radio to promote His will? 3) Do you believe most people in the church of which you are a part use and correctly understand the name *Christian*?
3. Brethren, knowledge is NOT an enemy of *the Faith* – we need Christians with a passionate awareness so that every cultural level can be communicated to concerning Christ!

III With Endless SIMPLICITY

- mistake in communicating, we often try to make the message complicated:

A. Complexity is Not the Mark of Smarts

1. J. Wallace Hamilton tells of two men coming out of church: “Boy, that was deep, wasn’t it?” “Yeah, I didn’t understand it either.”
2. A big mistake in communicating is trying to complicate the message:
3. First characteristic of a brilliant communicator – the ability to make the difficult simple = J Cottrel
4. Our Lord greatest example of this = no one had anything deeper to say than did Christ; yet, little, common people heard Him gladly!

B. Paul’s Message Was Profound Yet Simple

1. Began with a positive approach (17:22) – note: didn’t alienate them by saying “you bunch of ignorant heathen...”
2. He used a present day illustration (17:23) “*THE UNKNOWN GOD*”
3. Six points to his sermon:
 - 1) God is Creator of All (v 24)
 - 2) God is Ruler of All (v 26)
 - 3) God is Sustainer of All (v 27)

- 4) God is Father of All (v 29)
- 5) God Wants to be Savior of All (v 30)
- 6) God Will be Judge of All (v 31)

C. Our Message Must be Simple

1. The complexities of this life can only be simplified in God's presence...
2. His message (grace and mercy – forgiveness and peace with God) is so complex to the world... yet so simple even young lives can comprehend it...
3. God help us to make His profound message simple!

IV With Rational EXPECTATIONS

- Paul's expectations were not exaggerated; instead, they were real:

A. Some Will Sneer

1. V 32 speaks of *ridiculed* and or made fun...
2. Share your convictions in Christ with the world and you can plan on there being backlash:
 - Illus. – bro. Kenny tells me he has said to the elders of the which where he has served now for 30 years that we better plan on starting a prison ministry because many Christians will be heading there...

B. Some Will Procrastinate

1. V 32 sounds so noble "...we want to hear you more on this matter." But it was a cop-out...
2. One cannot be neutral with Jesus = either for Him or against Him

C. Some Will Respond

1. V 34 – some believed but most did not!
2. No matter how well we communicate the Gospel, better anticipate the majority people will reject it
3. Note: parable of the sower – problem was not in the seed... the problem was in the what? Soil!

Conclusion: Let me summarize and conclude with these two illustrations. Two men were in a hot-air balloon and were lost. They spotted a man on the ground so they made their descent within shouting distance hoping he could give them some directions. One of the men leaned over the edge of the basket and shouted, "Could you please tell us where we are?" The man quickly responded, "Yes, you are in a balloon about fifty feet in the air." The other man in the balloon said to his travel partner, "Let's ask someone who isn't from the IRS." His friend said, "How do you know he's from the IRS?" He responded, "Because he gave us a bunch of information which was absolutely of no value to us."

A newly commissioned ensign was at sea for the first time. He bumped into a seaman carrying a mop and pail. The ensign asked him, "Where are you going sailor?" He replied, "I'm going downstairs to mop the floor, sir." The ensign snorted back, "You better learn naval terminology, sailor. You're not going downstairs to mop the floor, you're going below to swab the deck." The sailor replied, "I'll try to remember, sir." The ensign came back, "You'd better. If I ever hear you say 'downstairs' again, I'll throw you out that little round window over there."

Yes, communicating is critical especially when we are communicating the TRUTH of the Gospel to those who need Christ as Lord and Savior. Again, are you and I being effective when we communicate Christ?

Effective With:

- 1) Solid CONVICTIONS
- 2) Passionate AWARENESS
- 3) Endless SIMPLICITY
- 4) Rational EXPECTATIONS