

**EVANGELISM:  
OUR MISSION, MESSAGE, METHOD, AND MOTIVE**

Selected Scriptures - August, 1994

Dennis McBride

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Some years ago, evangelist Paul Rader urged a banker in New York many times to receive Christ, but he did not respond. One day Rader sensed that God wanted him to go immediately and speak to this man again. Obediently he took a train and went with all speed to the town where the man lived. He hurried to the bank and found his friend standing in the doorway.

“Rader,” he said, “I’m glad to see you! I wrote a letter begging you to come, but later changed my mind and didn’t send it.” “That’s all right,” said the evangelist, “your message came through anyhow by way of Heaven.”

Under deep conviction of sin, the banker was impressed by Rader’s earnestness and his special effort to reach him with the Gospel, and that same hour he received Christ. Suddenly the banker gave a strange gasp and fell into the evangelist’s arms--DEAD! He had been saved on the very brink of eternity (H.G. Bosch, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, p. 1323).

One of the most exciting times in a Christian’s life is when he knows for certain that the Holy Spirit has personally directed him to share Christ with someone. The key to that kind of evangelism is availability--walking by the Spirit so He can use you at a moment’s notice.

If you ever feel a lack of purpose or direction in life, try leading someone to the Savior. You will become so swept away in the significance of the event, it will place everything else into proper focus. And consider this:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him ***before the foundation of the world***, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (***Eph. 1:3-6***).

Before the world began, God chose the elect. That means that before the world began, He knew whom He would use to lead the elect to Himself. He knew that *you* would witness to that family member, friend, or workmate. Additionally He providentially orchestrated that witnessing situation. Does that excite and motivate you? It should! Think of it: God is using you and me to fulfill the redemptive plan He initiated before the world began. What a tremendous privilege!

Yet the fact remains that whenever a Pastor starts talking about evangelism, some Christians experience stark terror. Or awkward verbal exchanges with strangers on airplanes or busses. Or feelings of inadequacy because evangelism doesn't seem to work for them. Or guilt because they don't "evangelize" enough. Or intimidation because they know someone who is so successful in leading people to the Lord that seemingly he could witness to a pine tree and have it splinter in repentance.

It has been my experience that many Christians are just plain frightened of evangelism--or at least with what they think evangelism should be. So if that's true of you, you're in good company. Quite frankly, I share some of those fears, and I've had opportunity to take a good, hard look at them while witnessing at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, preaching on skid row, going door to door, or "buttonholing" complete strangers on a street corner.

It's not that I'm ashamed of the gospel. It's just that I'm shy when it comes to engaging others in conversation--especially strangers. It's different when I'm speaking in a church service where the roles are clearly defined and people expect me to preach about Christ. That's easy! But other settings can be very challenging for me.

Many Christians are like Joseph of Arimathea (the man in whose tomb Jesus was buried). They remain silent for fear of what others might think of them, or because it might bring persecution of some kind.

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body (John 19:38).

Those kinds of fears need to be recognized and overcome, but the goal of this study is not to compound your guilt by beating you over the head with your responsibility to evangelize. Instead I want to clarify what evangelism is, and encourage you to be available to the Lord to communicate the gospel to those in your circle of influence who are without Christ.

Let's begin by asking: What is our Mission?

## **I. WHAT IS OUR MISSION?**

*Scripture uses four word pictures to describe our mission:*

### **A. WE ARE AMBASSADORS**

#### **1. The passage**

**2 Cor. 5:17-21** - "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us

to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

“Therefore, *we are ambassadors for Christ*, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

## 2. *The principles*

- a. People are alienated from God because of sin. Therefore they must be reconciled to Him.
- b. **Reconciliation** means “the bringing together of two parties that are in dispute; particularly, Christ’s bringing God and man together, the result of which is salvation” (*Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Millard Erickson, p. 140).
- c. Reconciliation comes *through Christ alone*, who came to take upon Himself our sin, and grant us His righteousness.
- d. We are ambassadors of that message.
  - 1) An ambassador is a special representative from one government, appointed to represent its interests to another.
  - 2) To represent Christ is a high honor and a significant investment of our lives.
- e. Key principle: Effective evangelism begins with the conviction that the greatest favor you can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ so they can be reconciled to God.

## **B. WE ARE SOWERS**

### 1. *The passage*

**Matt. 13:1-8; 19-23** - “On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach.

“And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, ‘Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty. . . .

““When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

““And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

## 2. *The principles*

- a. The emphasis in this parable is on soils more than sowers, but the application to evangelism should be clear.
- b. The seed represents the kingdom message (gospel).
- c. The soils represent various hearers of the kingdom message.
- d. The sower is the evangelist who spreads the word.
- e. Note that the burden of response falls to the soil, not the sower.
- f. It isn't the sower's fault if seed falls on unproductive soil.

## C. WE ARE FARMERS

### 1. *The passages*

- a. **1 Cor. 1:10-13** - “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

“For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

- b. **1 Cor. 3:1-9** - “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men?

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

“Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

### 2. *The principles*

- a. Too many Christians feel a sense of guilt or failure when someone they’ve witnessed to doesn’t receive Christ.
- b. But our job is to sow the seed. God alone causes the increase. We aren’t responsible for salvation, only for faithful labor.

- c. I suspect that few people come to Christ upon hearing the gospel for the first time.
- d. Key principle: Evangelism is a process involving many elements (planting, watering, etc.).
  - 1) Consider what it takes to produce fruit:
    - Is the seed less important than the new sprout?
    - Is the new sprout less important than the fresh leaves?
    - Are the fresh leaves less important than the buds?
    - Are the buds less important than the young fruit?
    - Is the young fruit less important than the ripe fruit?
  - 2) Each step in the process is equally as important to the final product.
  - 3) You can't tell the farmer who has just planted seed that he has failed to produce a crop. The harvest will come in due time, but it begins with planting.
  - 4) Similarly, when you plant the seed of the gospel into the soil of one's mind, you have taken a major step toward the final harvest. Likewise when you water that seed, you contribute to the final harvest.

## **D. WE ARE DISCIPLES**

### **1. *The passage***

***Matt. 28:18-20*** - "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

### **2. *The principles***

- a. Making disciples begins with leading people to Christ, but it doesn't end there.

- b. A discipler teaches new believers the things that Christ teaches in His Word, and what His Spirit revealed through the biblical writers (Peter, Paul, etc.).
- c. A discipler may not have led the disciple to Christ, but he or she contributes to the important task of leading that young believer into spiritual maturity.

## **II. WHAT IS OUR MESSAGE?**

*Our message must clearly communicate what Jesus said about Himself, salvation, and us.*

### **A. WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?**

#### **1. Matthew 16:13-15**

“When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”

- a. With that brief question Jesus Christ confronted His disciples with the most important issue they would ever face.
- b. After spending much time with them and making some bold claims about His identity and authority, the time had come for them to believe or deny His teachings.
- c. Christ’s question was not limited to His disciples. It extends to everyone. Everyone must believe or deny what the Bible teaches about Jesus. That’s the heart of our message.
- d. The importance of our response cannot be overstated. Our view of Jesus determines our values, lifestyle, and eternal destiny.
- e. Who do you say Jesus is?

#### **2. An extraordinary claim**

- a. When Jesus was on earth there was much confusion about who He was.

- b. Some thought He was a wise man or a great prophet. Others thought He was a madman or a false prophet. Still others couldn't decide or didn't care who He was.
- c. But Jesus claimed to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), the long awaited Messiah of Israel (John 4:25-26).
- d. That means He claimed to be no one less than the God of the universe in human flesh:
- 1) **John 4:25-26** - The Samaritan woman at the well said to Jesus, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.' Jesus said to her, **'I who speak to you am He.'**"
  - 2) **John 5:17-18** - After healing a lame man on the Sabbath, Jesus said to some Jewish antagonists, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.' For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, **making Himself equal with God.**"
  - 3) **John 10:27-33** - Jesus said to some Jewish antagonists, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'  
  
"The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?' The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and **because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.**'"
  - 4) **John 19:7** - Some Jewish leaders said to Pilate, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because **He made Himself out to be the Son of God.**"

5) Jesus also said:

- **John 5:23-24** - Honor the Son as you honor the Father.
- **John 8:19** - To know Me is to know the Father.
- **John 14:9** - To see Me, is to see the Father.

### 3. *A common misunderstanding*

- a. Many people today don't understand that Jesus claimed to be God, so they're content to think of Him as little more than a prophet or a great moral teacher.

Apparently they fail to realize that a mere human being who claims to be God is either a self-deceived madman or a liar, but he certainly isn't a prophet or great moral teacher.

- b. C.S. Lewis observed, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity*, pp. 40-41).
- c. Yet many who deny Christ's deity still revere Him as a great man. Perhaps they find that contradiction easier to tolerate than the contradiction of charging Jesus with lunacy or deceit. Such charges that can't stand a moment before His moral purity and dignity. After all, if *He* was a lunatic, what does that make *us*?
- d. Church historian Philip Schaff correctly observes:

"How could he be [a fanatic] or a madman who never lost the even balance of his mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of his Church, the destruction of Jerusalem-- predictions that have been literally fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction" (*History of the Christian Church* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1962], p. 103).

#### 4. *An appropriate response*

If the claims of Jesus were true, He is God! And the only appropriate response is to love and obey Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:37).

### **B. WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT US?**

#### 1. *We were created, not mutated*

- a. Contrary to most contemporary thinking, man is not the product of evolution. We do not exist by accident or mutation.
- b. The Bible says we were created by a personal God to love Him, serve Him, and enjoy His fellowship for all eternity.
- c. Psalm 100:3 says, “Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.”

#### 2. *Jesus made us*

The New Testament says that Jesus created everything:

“*All things* came into being by [Jesus], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3).

“By [Jesus] *all things* were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things have been created by Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

#### 3. *Jesus owns us*

- a. Because Jesus created everything, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19).
- b. That means He has authority over our lives, and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

#### 4. *Because of sin, we reject His authority*

- a. Sin is rebellion toward God.

The Bible calls our rebellion “sin,” and God’s holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death (Ezek. 18:4).

b. Sin is an attitude of the heart.

That is hard for us to understand because we tend to evaluate sin on a relative scale--some sins being less serious than others (e.g., “little white lies” versus murder). However, the Bible teaches that all acts of sin are the result of sinful thinking and evil desires.

c. Sin is universal.

- 1) According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin and incapable of changing his or her sinful condition: “There is no man who does not sin” (1 Kings 8:46); “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).
- 2) That doesn’t mean we’re incapable of acts of human kindness. We might even be involved in various religious or philanthropic activities.
- 3) What it does mean is that apart from Christ we’re utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God.

That why the Bible says, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Rom. 3:10-12).

d. Sin alienates us from God.

- 1) The prophet Isaiah said, “Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear [your prayers]” (Isa. 59:2).
- 2) Our alienation prevents us from loving and serving God as we should.
- 3) In addition, we’re cut off from the only true source of meaning, fulfillment, and happiness. So we spend our lives attempting to satisfy our deepest longings with money, sex, drugs, or a myriad of other things that can never replace God’s love and peace in our hearts.

e. A mistaken notion.

- 1) Many people mistakenly think they can redeem themselves, please God, or achieve holiness if they simply do their best to keep the Ten Commandments or live by the principles of Christ's Sermon on the Mount.
- 2) They don't realize that God's Law wasn't given to save them, but to reveal their sinfulness and their desperate need for a Savior (Gal. 3:24).
- 3) So the harder they try to please God through their own efforts, the more they offend Him by showing contempt for Christ's sacrifice. Their efforts are as worthless and offensive to God as a pile of filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).
- 4) In addition, God's standard of holiness is absolute, not relative. If we want to please Him by our own efforts, we must keep *every* command perfectly:

James 2:10 says, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

Galatians 3:10 is even stronger: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them."

f. Sin renders us spiritually dead.

- 1) Just as someone who is physically dead cannot respond to physical stimuli, those who are spiritually dead are incapable of responding to spiritual truth.
- 2) All unbelievers are dead in their trespasses and sins, and will experience God's wrath unless they turn from sin and trust Christ for their salvation (Eph. 2:1-3).
- 3) A frightening paradox is that many spiritually dead people are very religious, so they think they're spiritually alive.
- 4) But religion can be a way of avoiding God rather than seeking Him.

- 5) The goal of false religion is to replace the true God with false gods and to keep their adherents preoccupied with attempting to earn their salvation rather than trusting in Christ's redemption.
  - 6) Although such people seem spiritually alive, in reality they're just as spiritually dead as someone who openly curses God.
- g. Sin results in eternal punishment.

Sin not only separates us from God in this life, but it also dooms us to the horrifying punishment of separation from God in hell for all eternity (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:15).

## **C. WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT SALVATION?**

### **1. *Jesus is the Savior***

- a. A savior is someone who saves or delivers someone from danger. We are in danger of eternal punishment because we disobey God (2 Thess. 1:9).
- b. The truth is, we *cannot* obey Him because we have neither the desire nor the ability to do so. We are by nature rebellious toward Him (Eph. 2:1-3).
- c. That's why simply changing our pattern of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences. We need to be transformed internally so our thinking and desires are holy.
- d. Jesus is the only one who can forgive and transform us, thereby delivering us from the power and penalty of sin:

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

He is “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13).

### **2. *Jesus is the Redeemer***

To redeem someone is to pay a price to secure his or her freedom from slavery or bondage. Our enslavement to sin is

so serious and so thorough that God alone could pay the redemption price.

### 3. *God's solution for sin*

- a. Though God's justice demanded death for sin, His love provided Christ, who bore our penalty and died in our place:

“Christ . . . died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God” (Rom. 3:26).

- b. Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him.

John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

### 4. *Salvation is by faith in Christ*

- a. Saving faith is the gracious gift of God that enables us to believe in Christ. By faith we receive the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Eph. 2:8-9 says, “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

- b. But faith is commonly misunderstood. Some people think it's little more than the ability to believing something you know isn't true. Others think it doesn't matter what you believe as long as your belief is sincere.

- 1) Such thinking betrays an ignorance of the relationship of faith to its object. If the object of your faith is true, your faith is valid. Without a valid object your faith is useless.

- 2) For example, if you take poison, thinking it's medicine, all the faith in the world won't save your life.

- 3) Similarly, if Jesus is the only source of salvation, and you're trusting in anyone or anything else for your salvation, your faith is useless.

- e. Many people believe that there are many paths to God and that each religion represents an aspect of truth. But Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, *but through Me*” (John 14:6).

He didn't claim to be one of many equally valid paths to God, or the way to God for His day only. He claimed to be the *only* way to God--then and forever. That is a unique and exclusive claim that was verified by His resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

## 5. *The content of saving faith*

Rom. 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

- a. Confession of Jesus as Lord involves humbly submitting to His sovereign authority (Phil. 2:10-11) and telling others that you are trusting in Him alone for salvation (Matt. 10:32-33).
- b. Believing that God has raised Him from the dead involves trusting in the historical fact of His resurrection, which is the pinnacle of Christian faith and the means by which the Father validated the deity and authority of the Son (Romans 1:4; Acts 17:30-31).

## 6. *The proof of saving faith*

Saving faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin and obedience to God's Word.

- a. Repentance from Sin
  - 1) Like faith itself, repentance is also a gift from God (Acts 11:18). It is more than simply being sorry for sin; it also involves an ACT:  
  
**A** = Agreeing with God that you are sinful.  
**C** = Confessing your sins to Him.  
**T** = Turning from sin to pursue holiness.
  - 2) Prov. 28:13 says, “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.”

3) Isa. 55:7 adds, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

b. Obedience to God’s Word

1) Obedience is inseparably linked to saving faith. In fact, the Bible often uses faith and obedience interchangeably.

For example, John 3:36 says, “He who *believes* in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not *obey* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

2) Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15); and “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31).

3) To love Christ is to obey Him. That is the hallmark of a true believer. It isn’t enough simply to believe certain facts about Him. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don’t love and obey Him. They believe but they’re not saved.

4) The crucial difference is that saving faith responds in obedience: “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

### **III. WHAT IS OUR METHOD?**

*Here are some tips that might be helpful when communicating the gospel to unbelievers.*

#### **A. REMEMBER THAT EVANGELISM IS A PROCESS**

1. *You may be planting the seed that others will water.*

a. You may be watering a seed that others have planted and still others will harvest.

b. You may be harvesting a crop that others have planted and watered.

- c. Or you may plant, water, and harvest at one time.
2. ***Your faithfulness is just as important as the faithfulness of others who may be involved in the process.***

## **B. RELY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT**

1. ***Pray, pray, pray***
  - a. ***Rom. 10:1*** - Paul said of His Jewish kinsmen: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.”
  - b. You can say you care, but if you pray, you really care!
2. ***Only the Holy Spirit can impart the spiritual understanding that leads to salvation.***

***1 Thess. 1:2-5*** - “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”

## **C. UNDERSTAND YOUR LIMITATIONS**

1. ***You are the ambassador, proclaimer, farmer, sower, planter, and waterer. But God alone can transform a human heart.***
2. ***You mustn’t be complacent. You must be faithful. But you mustn’t take upon yourself more than God has allotted to you.***
3. ***That may be a new thought for you if you’ve been taught that the power of persuasion is able to bring someone to Christ.***
  - a. You may reason, “If my words are effective enough, my timing just right, or my appeal emotional enough, that will do the trick.”
  - b. Or, “What about 2 Cor. 5:10-11? Aren’t we supposed to persuade men to come to Christ to avoid judgment?”

“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”

- That passage is not about evangelism.
  - The context of that passage speaks of Christians who will appear before Christ for rewards, not unbelievers who will be judged.
  - “Fear” refers to reverential awe for God, not fear of His judgment.
  - “Persuade” addresses Paul’s compulsion of persuading the Corinthians of His apostolic credentials so that he will fulfill his ministry in a way consistent with His calling (Hughes, *NICNT*).
- c. When it comes to evangelism, a good rule of thumb is to work like it all depends on you; pray like it all depends on God! But don’t confuse the two.

#### **D. KNOW THE GOSPEL**

##### **1. Know a simply, clear, concise presentation of the gospel.**

*Such as our three-point outline from our last section:*

- What did Jesus say about Himself?
- What did Jesus say about us?
- What did Jesus say about salvation?

##### **2. Know where to go in Scripture to find the gospel.**

###### **a. One popular method is “The Romans Road”**

- The fact of sin - Romans 3:9-12
- The extent of sin - Romans 3:23
- The solution for sin - Romans 3:24; 5:8
- The response to sin - Romans 10:9-13

###### **b. Some other helpful passages:**

- John 1:12
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Titus 3:4-5
- 1 John 5:11-13

3. *Some may ask, “What good does it do to tell people what Jesus said if they don’t believe in Jesus or in what He said?”*

Our task is to present the message. God will do the rest.

**Rom. 10:17** - “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Faith comes as a result of hearing the gospel.”

**Heb. 4:12** - “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

#### **E. KEEP IT SIMPLE AND CLARIFY TERMINOLOGY**

1. *Don’t assume that your message is easy to grasp.*

The God of the universe coming to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins may be a familiar theme to you, but it is profound, and will likely sound strange or offensive to the uninitiated.

2. *Don’t assume that non-Christians understand Christian terminology.*

Someone who reads a sign that says “Jesus Saves,” may think, “Jesus saves *what*--dimes, nickels, quarters?” What may sound flippant or sacrilegious to us could be a perfectly logical response to someone unacquainted with our terminology.

3. *Don’t necessarily avoid Christian terminology, but be sure to define it as clearly as possible.*

Do you understand the gospel thoroughly enough to explain the following words in simple terms? If not, you may need to do some study.

- Christian
- Grace
- Salvation
- Redemption
- Reconciliation
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Repentance

4. ***Even people who think they understand Christian terminology may not really understand at all.***

a. That includes people who think they're Christians, but really aren't.

b. Paul said of his unsaved Jewish brothers and sisters:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (which is Christ Himself) (***Rom. 10:1-3***).

5. ***Consider some of the more popular misconceptions about Christianity.***

a. A Christian is someone who joins a church or is baptized.

- We call this error “conversion by association.”

b. A Christian is someone who is born in America, because this is a Christian nation.

- Actually, being born in America simply makes someone an American.

c. A Christian is someone who is born into a religious family.

- Actually, being born into a religious family simply makes someone a member of a religious family.

d. Living a good moral life will get me into heaven.

- Morality isn't the issue: Jesus is.

e. Jesus is simply one of many equally good paths to God.

- Jesus made exclusive claims about Himself: “I am the way, truth, life, no one comes to the Father but by me.”

f. To become a Christian, you simply have to kiss your brain goodbye!

- Actually, there is compelling evidence for the truth of Christianity if someone takes the time to examine it.

g. Jesus is someone you add to your life, like a cosmic good luck charm. He's the Big Brother in the sky.

**6. *The Lord may use you to clarify what the gospel really is.***

a. That level of ministry isn't always welcome because an increasing number of people love vague religiosity and object to doctrinal clarity--especially when it challenges their religious traditions or upsets their lifestyle.

b. A good starting point for clarifying the gospel is to ask someone what he or she thinks of Christ. Their response will be a good indicator of their spiritual condition.

**7. *Remember that no matter how politely someone might reject Christ, their rejection is just as final as someone who rejects Him with cursing and blasphemy.***

a. That's what Jesus faced continually with the Jewish religious leaders, who were devoutly religious people but opposed Jesus to the point of killing Him.

b. Paul said, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed" (1 Cor. 16:22).

**8. *Additionally, some false teachers deliberately redefine terminology to appear Christian, but their goal is deception.***

*An example: 2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15* - "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

"For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. . . .

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise

themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.”

## **F. FOCUS ON CENTRAL ISSUES**

### **1. Key question: Who is Jesus?**

#### ***Matthew 16:13-15***

“When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do YOU say that I am?’”

### **2. Avoid arguing peripheral issues or getting caught up in intellectual debate for the sake of debate.**

a. Winning a debate doesn’t necessarily equal winning a soul.

b. Some peripheral issues include:

- Denominationalism
- Inspiration of Scripture
- Creation/Evolution
- Why do the innocent suffer?
- Are heathens really lost?

### **3. Be prepared to respond to thoughtful inquires.**

a. John Stott said,

“We cannot pander to a man’s intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity” (Cited in *How to Give Away Your Faith*, Paul Little, p. 106).

b. For example, how would you respond to these questions?

- Is Christianity reasonable?
- How can we know if the Bible is reliable?
- What did Jesus claim about Himself?
- How could Jesus, who was a man, be God?
- What evidence exists for Christ’s resurrection?
- Do miracles really occur?

c. You should be able to give at least an initial response that is thoughtful.

## **G. DON'T PROCLAIM A MAN-CENTERED GOSPEL**

*In other words, don't emphasize what Christ can do for them, to the neglect of who Christ is.*

- 1. We owe Christ allegiance.*
- 2. We are obligated to Him.*
- 3. We are to worship Him because of who He is.*
- 4. We must not make the gospel so man-centered that we lose sight of God's holiness and righteous requirements.*
- 5. If we slip into the health/wealth/prosperity format, we lose the ability to define and address a person's true spiritual need, and run the risk of attracting self-centered, shallow, emotional, rocky, and thorny Christians (see Matt. 13:18-22).*
- 6. We must speak the truth in love, allowing the Holy Spirit to penetrate people's hearts and bring true conviction and repentance.*

## **H. DON'T BE AFRAID TO "POP THE QUESTION"**

- 1. "Will you receive Christ now?"*
- 2. "What is preventing you from trusting Christ right now?"*

## **I. BE PATIENT**

- 1. How long have you been praying for the salvation of a loved one or acquaintance?*
- 2. How long did it take you to come to Christ?*
- 3. As long as an unbeliever is alive, there is hope for his or her salvation. Don't give up!*

## **J. WATCH YOUR MOTIVES**

- 1. Which leads into our next section.*
- 2. Examples of wrong motives:*
  - "I want my husband to come to Christ so we will stop abusing me, cheating on me, etc."*

- “I want my wife to come to Christ so she will stop nagging me.”
- “I want my child to come to Christ so he or she will stop misbehaving.”
- “I want my neighbors to come to Christ so they will stop throwing all-night wild parties when I need to sleep.”
- “We want people in this community to come to Christ so they will attend our church and our church will grow.”
- “I want our society to come to Christ so it will be a better and safer place to live.”

3. *A proper motive:*

“I want people to come to Christ because salvation glorifies Christ, who is worthy of all glory, and because salvation the best thing that can happen to my spouse, child, friend, neighbor, society.

4. *Remember:*

Evangelism begins with the conviction that the greatest favor you can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ so they can be reconciled to God.

## **IV. WHAT IS OUR MOTIVE?**

*There are six key motivational factors in evangelism, which we will explore under these headings:*

- *Commission*
- *Command*
- *Compulsion*
- *Compassion*
- *Charity*
- *Confidence*

### **A. COMMISSION**

*Do I understand the crucial role of evangelism in fulfilling the Great Commission?*

1. *Evangelism is part of the “Great Commission.”*

Someone might object: “Hold it. Evangelism IS the Great Commission.”

2. ***But let’s take a closer look at Matthew 28:18-20***

Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ***Go*** therefore and ***MAKE DISCIPLES*** of all the nations, ***Baptizing*** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ***Teaching*** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

3. ***A point of clarification:***

a. That passage literally says

“Going therefore disciple ye all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatever I gave command to you” (*Nestle Greek Text Interlinear*).

b. The Great Commission goes beyond evangelism. We are to make disciples, which only begins with evangelism.

c. “Go” = This participle is more precisely translated “having gone,” which makes it more of an assumption than a command.

4. ***“Commission” defined***

*Webster’s New World Dictionary* - “The authority to act in behalf of another.”

5. ***Our Commission detailed***

a. Webster’s definition is consistent with Scripture.

b. ***Note the “therefore” of v. 19*** (which refers back to the authority mentioned in v. 18).

1) Christ has all authority (cf., Eph. 1:18-23). Therefore, He can commission us to go and make disciples in His Name.

2) We have His delegated authority. When we share the gospel, and when we engage in the process of disciple-making, we do so in the power and authority of God Himself.

c. Why we need God's authority.

- 1) We are entering Satan's domain. He is the ruler of this world; the god of this age. The whole world lies in his grasp.
- 2) We are attempting to snatch souls from him, and we have no power or authority to do so apart from Christ.
- 3) He will not let them go without a fight, which in our own strength we are utterly incapable of winning.
- 4) We can't compete in that arena with fleshly weapons.

***Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:3-5*** - "Thought we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

***Jesus said in Matt. 13:19*** - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."

## **B. COMMAND**

***Do I appreciate the fact that  
I am under direct orders to proclaim Christ?***

### **1. The Great Commission is also the Great Command.**

This is Christ's mandate for evangelism and discipleship. We are to be making disciples and equipping them for the work of the ministry.

2. *We are obliged to make disciples.*

C. **COMPULSION**

*Do I share Paul's sense of  
urgency and purpose in proclaiming Christ?*

1. *We are under compulsion, constraint, or obligation.*

2. *This akin to command, but with a slightly different slant.*

- a. Being commanded should give us a sense of priority; about the task at hand; being compelled gives us a sense of urgency and mission.
- b. Being commanded should help us appreciate the importance of the task; being compelled should help us appreciate the weight of the task.

3. *Paul sensed this about his own ministry.*

- a. In *1 Cor. 9:16-17* he said, "If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me."
- b. This compulsion isn't primarily an inner compulsion or subjective feeling (though Paul certainly sensed that). It is an external, objective, divine destiny.
  - Paul did not choose Christ; Christ chose Paul.
  - Paul did not choose to preach the gospel; Christ called him to that task.
  - This was Paul's pre-ordained destiny, revealed to him on the road to Damascus.
  - In that sense, Paul ministered against his will.
  - Therefore, he had a stewardship responsibility to fulfill, and he sensed that responsibility profoundly.
  - And he knew he would face divine chastening if he neglected the task.
- c. I realize that Paul's call as an Apostle and the time of his ministry were unique, but since we are commanded and commissioned to evangelize and make disciples, we, too, are under obligation to fulfill that task.

- d. Therefore, there are some general principles from Paul's experience that apply to us also.
- We have a God-given task.
  - We are compelled to pursue that task.
  - Also, we should sense an inner compulsion due to its urgency.

Commission, Command, and Compulsion are important motivational factors in evangelism. They define our duty to evangelize. But, of course, that isn't the only motivation we have. Something important is lost if we come across as, "Friend, I'm telling you of Christ because it's my duty to do so." That's like saying, "Wife, I'm going to be faithful to you because Jesus commands me to do so."

#### **D. COMPASSION**

*When was the last time I truly grieved over a lost soul?*

*Am I characteristically moved by compassion to the point of sacrificial involvement in bringing others to Christ?*

1. *This is a common term that describes how Jesus felt as He looked upon fallen humanity.*
  - a. *Matt. 20:34* - Regarding two blind men, it is written that, "moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him."
  - b. *Mark 1:40-41* - "A leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' And moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand, and touched him, and \*said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."
  - c. *Luke 7:13* - When widow of Nain lost her only son to death, "the Lord saw her [and] He felt compassion for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother."

- d. **Luke 10:33** - The Good Samaritan: “But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion.”
- e. **Luke 15:20** - The Prodigal Son’s father - “And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.”

2. **One primary text about compassion is Mark 6:30-34.**

a. **Mark 6:30-34**

“The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.’ (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)

“And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. And the people saw them going, and many recognized them, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and **He felt compassion for them** because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”

- b. **“Compassion”** (*splanchnizomai*) means, “to be moved inwardly.” The Greek root word, *splanchna*, refers to the bowels or inward parts. The idea is akin to pity and sympathy, which are great at motivating a person to action.

c. Application

- 1) Why should we evangelize?
  - a) Because we see the need.
  - b) We see the situation as Christ sees it.
  - c) We know the solution and are moved with compassion to offer that solution to those in need.
  - d) We are filled with compassion!

- 2) When was the last time you wept over a lost soul?
- 3) Are you easily moved to the point of sacrifice or inconvenience for the benefit of the lost?
- 4) It seem that so often we struggle even to set aside the time to speak to others about Christ; yet Christ Himself set aside the glory of heaven to come to seek and save us.

## **E. CHARITY**

*Is my love for Christ strong enough  
to motivate me to share Him with others?*

1. *Also, we should evangelize the lost out of love for God.*
  - a. When you love someone, you can't wait to tell others. And even when you don't talk about it, others know anyway--because of the way you honor and respect that person.
  - b. Similarly, if you love God, you should want to do what honors Him.
2. *When people confess Christ as Lord, it glorifies the Father, who is worthy of all Glory; and it honors the Son, who is worthy of all honor.*
  - a. *Philippians 2:9-11* - "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
  - b. *Ephesians 1:5-6, 11-12* - "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. . . .  
  
"We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we

who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

3. *Winning the lost to Christ glorifies God, therefore our love for Him should compel us to spread the good news. Does it?*

#### **F. CONFIDENCE**

*Am I ashamed of the gospel?*

1. *If you have confidence in the Lord, and in His Word; and if you have assurance of your salvation, you are far more likely to share Christ with others than if you're plagued with doubts, ignorance, and insecurity.*

*And----others are far more likely to listen to you!*

- a. How would you respond to a salesman who used this approach?

Salesman: “I’d like to sell you this product.”

You: “Why should I buy it?”

Salesman: “Because it’s supposed to make life easier for you.”

You: “Do you use it?”

Salesman: “Well, sometimes.”

You: “Does it make life easier for you?”

Salesman: “Not really, but I’m sure it will for you. At least that’s what the promotional literature and instruction manual claim.”

That approach isn’t very convincing, is it?

- b. What it means to have confidence in the Lord:
- 1) Like Paul, you can say, “I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and **I am convinced** that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).
  - 2) You **know** Him personally and experience His grace, mercy, and provisions. You’ve grown to **trust** Him and take Him at His Word.

- c. What it means to have confidence in the Word:
  - 1) You know the gospel and can find your way around the Bible.
  - 2) You have at least a basic knowledge of primary doctrines.
  - 3) You can chapter and verse your convictions.
  - 4) You're not afraid to introduce biblical principles into a situation or conversation.
  
- d. What it means to have the assurance of your salvation:
  - 1) His Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are a Child of God (Rom. 8:16).
  - 2) You have a settled peace that all is well between you and the Lord.

2. ***Even a man of Timothy's spiritual stature was cautioned against losing confidence.***

**2 Tim. 1:3-12** - "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

"Therefore **do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner**; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

“For this reason I also suffer these things, ***but I am not ashamed***; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”

### 3. “Ashamed” defined:

- a. Paul does not use the term “ashamed” with primary reference to human feelings (i.e. feeling ashamed for something you did or didn’t do).
- b. The Greek word Paul uses refers primarily to silencing or bringing to naught.

- ***1 Cor. 1:27*** - “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.”

- ***Romans 5:5*** - “Hope does not disappoint [‘put to shame’ - same root word as 2 Tim. 1:8, 12], because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

***Meaning***, “Hope does not rest on something that does not exist, but on God’s future plans” (Colin/Brown, Vol. 3, p. 563).

- c. To be ***unashamed***, therefore, is to confess, affirm, or speak out. To take a stand.

To be ***ashamed*** is to be silenced, or put to naught.

***In Rom. 1:16***, when he said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”, Paul was echoing an early Christian confession.

### 4. Timothy’s challenges

- a. His youth - He was a young man with tremendous responsibilities.
- b. His personality - He was timid.
- c. His calling - In some respects, he was Paul’s successor.
- d. Paul’s circumstances - He was facing death in prison.

- e. Threat of persecution - Paul encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed (Timothy wasn't ashamed. Paul was simply trying to prevent that from happening), and to join with Paul in suffering for the gospel.
- f. The spiritual warfare he fought must have been staggering, and yet Paul made it clear that he was to commit himself to even more trials if necessary, and that he had no just cause for ceasing to stand firm on his confession of the gospel.

## 5. *Our challenges*

- a. In contrast to Timothy's Christ-centered conflicts, increasing numbers of professing believers today are struggling with conflicts that arise, not from the gospel, but from their secular preferences and pursuits.
  - 1) Many seem to have precious little firm biblical conviction. Consequently, when difficulties come because of the gospel, they become ashamed and stop speaking and standing firm (cf. Matt. 13:19-22).
  - 2) Part of that is due to more than two decades of many churches preaching a man-centered gospel.
- b. We're fighting a real uphill battle in this regard because Christianity has become so self-centered, and many Christians so self-absorbed and introspective, that even when we do share the gospel, it's often watered down to appeal to the hearer's own self-indulgent spirit.
  - Counseling, not preaching, is the watchword for our day.
  - Self-help, not holiness, is the pursuit of our day.
  - Human potential, not human depravity, is the doctrine of our day.
  - A "what's in it for me" mentality can obscure the urgency, seriousness, and life and death nature of the matter at hand.

## 6. *But through it all, the power of the gospel still redeems lost men and women. Therefore, may our efforts at evangelism be faithful, and our motives pure.*