

christian

WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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HOW TO EXCEL IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Rob Whitacre

The churches of Christ in America are on a steady decline. Over the past three years, we have lost 225 congregations and 55,334 members. Those who seek RATIONALIZATION minimize our losses by pointing to similar declines among our denominational friends. Those who seek EXPLANATION (should we dare say excuses) cite increased distractions, entertainment, secularization, busyness, and muchness. While all of these things may be true, it does not change the numbers. The only way to address this crisis is by EVANGELIZATION! If churches of Christ are going to survive in America, we MUST return to our roots and once again train the saved to teach the lost.

Unfortunately, at least two generations have risen who know not evangelism. We have children who have grown up in homes and have never seen their parents conduct a personal Bible. Remaining still is a generation who remembers a time when churches grew. Christians carried around a film projector in the trunk of their car and showed their family, friends, and neighbors the Jewell Miller Bible study series. We "were" the fastest growing religious body in America. We excelled at soul winning! I believe those days can return if we train the saved. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Here are four proven Biblical things we can do to help turn things around.

1. Invite people into our HOME: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42) Have we forgotten that our homes are a tool for bringing souls to Christ. The mat in front of too many Christian

doors reads "Come Back Later" instead of "Welcome." Open homes equal open hearts. Our first century brethren had open homes. They were eating together, praying together, and studying together (Acts 2:46; 20:20). We have found that over 90% of those we engage in Bible study from our home obey the Gospel.

2. Extend Christian HOSPITALITY: I am afraid that this Christian attribute is almost lost in modern America. Hospitality is defined as "love of strangers." The Greek word is used in Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." All Christians are

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Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

SOME EVANGELISM DO'S AND DON'TS

We rarely forget the last words of a person we love. We treasure them and replay them over and over again in our minds. So it should be with the last words our Lord spoke on this earth. Matthew 28:18-20 says,

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

As we busy ourselves with evangelism, the work of taking the gospel of Christ into a lost world, there are some foundational and practical points that we should keep in mind. These "Do's and Don'ts" will help us to be effective in carrying out the great commission.

Do...

Be patient. It is easy to become impatient and wonder why it takes so long for a person to obey the gospel. But we must remember that the ground has to be prepared before the seed can be planted and take root, and often that takes time. Paul spoke of those whose minds had been blinded by the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He also spoke of those who "oppose themselves" and are caught in the "snare of the Devil" and "taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Sin has deep and powerful roots, and it may take time to help a person climb out of its chains. That is why Paul commanded,

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves...(2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Be consistent. John wrote, "He that saith, I know him,

and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Hypocrisy is sure to thwart any evangelistic effort. If people hear us say one thing and see us do another, their trust in us will almost certainly implode, and we may never be given an opportunity to talk with them again. We must be consistent in what we say (Phil. 2:14-15) and what we do (Phil. 4:9).

Show love and understanding. We must always remember the motive of evangelism—love. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It was His love that motivated Him to leave the glory of Heaven to come to earth and sacrifice Himself for us (2 Cor. 5:14). He calls us to love one another as He loves us. Jesus was compassionate and cared about people deeply (Matt. 9:36). So must we. We must be mindful of the fact that those to whom we take the gospel are dealing with the very real effects of sin in their lives (see point 1). Their circumstances may be extremely difficult, and we may or may not have ever dealt with a situation exactly like theirs. We must remember that love is patient and kind (1 Cor. 13:4) and follow the example of Paul who said,

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls (1 Thess. 2:7-8).

Pray for an open heart. It should go without saying that prayer must play a prominent role in all of our evangelistic efforts. We should pray for wisdom and courage on our part, and open hearts on the part of the hearers. Read Acts 13:1-3, Luke 8:15, and Luke 6:45.

Exercise Wisdom. Wisdom should always be exercised in evangelism because no two people,

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circumstances, or studies are exactly the same. Jude wrote,

And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 22-23).

Jesus said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). We often talk about "meeting people where they are." The idea of that sentiment is to take time to get to know the person we want to teach and understand as much as we can about their religious history, level of bible knowledge, circumstances of life, etc. so that we may be able to approach them in the most productive way possible.

Do not...

Compromise. Though we should be thoughtful and tactful in its presentation, we must never compromise the truth. We must avoid the temptation to say what a person wants to hear and always say what they need to hear. False teachers

speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error (2 Pet. 2:18).

But the servant of the Lord keeps nothing back (Acts 20:20) and does not avoid teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Overwhelm. The old saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day," surely has some application to evangelism. Again, soil must be prepared. In most cases, a person will not obey the gospel after one sermon or personal bible study. We must be careful not to overwhelm them with more food than they can handle in one sitting (c.f. 1 Pet. 2:2) but carefully and patiently help guide them through the scriptures. Note that Paul spent three years in Ephesus teaching night and day (Acts 20:31). It may be that we must spend the same amount of time, or more, working to teach a person the gospel.

Try to impress. Evangelism must never be about showcasing my faith or bible knowledge. It's not about me; it's about God, and about souls. Conversions never happen because of man's wisdom, but because of God's (Rom. 1:16). Never forget 1 Corinthians 1:19-21-

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where

is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Be ashamed. Above all we must never be ashamed or embarrassed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16). Not everyone will willingly hear and obey the truth (Rom. 10:16). Many will reject our evangelistic efforts, but we must never allow that rejection to cause of to shy away from the only message that can save man. David said, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed" (Ps. 119:46). Everyone needs the gospel, even kings and presidents. With faith and courage let us take the glorious gospel of Christ into a world that so desperately needs it.

CW

WHY EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN EVANGELISM

Doyle Wells

1. Evangelism imitates the work that Jesus did on earth. The record of Jesus' life shows more individual teaching situations than public. Privately teaching helps to explain the whole counsel of God, as Jesus did. Individual needs can be dealt with better in an individual teaching situation.

2. Evangelism will seek and save the lost. The purpose of Jesus was "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). As Christians, we should be trying to find the lost who are unaware of their spiritual condition, and the Lord will work with us to open their eyes to His truth.

3. Evangelism is one of the commands God has given us. The disciples understood His command very clearly in the first century. It is no more difficult to understand today. Remember the command is to "Go and make disciples," not "Go and make excuses."

4. Evangelism follows the pattern before us. Paul said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). We might call this spiritual 20/20 vision.

5. Evangelism bears fruit that glorifies God. The Bible is very clear that not everyone can be a public teacher, but every Christian is to bear fruit. Jesus said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). A few verses later, He added, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

6. Evangelism helps us all to appreciate the power of the Gospel more and more. The more we become involved in evangelism, the more we see the Scriptures applied personally to increase our own faith in the Gospel.

7. Evangelism develops enthusiasm in the workers. The more involved each of us is in the work the Lord has given us, the more enthusiastic we become. Involvement of individual Christians was the key to the growth of the Lord's church in the first century, and it will be today.

8. Evangelism helps us appreciate the spiritual blessings we enjoy in Christ. When an individual becomes obedient to the Gospel, the light of excitement as he or she begins to appreciate the spiritual blessings in Christ is seen in the eyes, and that helps the worker to have renewed appreciation for the spiritual blessings God has given us.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." (Luke 10:2)

observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

In verse one, Solomon is saying that when occasions arise to do something, do it. "Cast thy bread" has reference to the sowing of grain. The "waters" are the rain waters which have not receded from the ground yet. Solomon says to plant the seed, even though the flood waters still cover the ground, for it will produce.

Then in verse four, Solomon describes the man that makes excuses for not planting. This person "observeth the wind," meaning that it is too windy to plant. This man may say that it looks like it might rain, because he "regardeth the clouds." Thus, he makes excuses over the smallest things and will never be able to plant his seed. Today, the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), and the field is the world of souls. As Christians, we are sowers of the Word of God (Matt. 20:18-20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:14-16), and God expects us to plant the seed. Often, however, we pass up the opportunity to teach someone about Jesus Christ. Maybe we do not realize that we will be held accountable for our forsaken responsibilities. The opportunity was pointed out by Christ as being fields "white unto harvest" (Joh 4:35). These opportunities combine with our abilities as Christians to produce responsibility. Sometimes we have the audacity to try and make excuses for not going into the field to sow.

What are some reasons for not going to the fields? One reason might be fear. Sometimes we are afraid that the person we approach will laugh at us, or slam the door in our face. It could be that we are afraid to jeopardize our relationship. Maybe we are afraid that they will ask us a question that we do not know. Fear is not a reason to abandon the work of the Lord. Consider Ananias in Acts 9. He was called by God to go and help Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee that was a known prosecutor of the Way. Ananias was afraid of Saul because he had heard of the deeds which Saul had done, but God said, "Go." It is unlikely that we will suffer physical persecution of the sort Ananias feared, but for some reason we are still afraid to go.

Another feeble excuse given by some is that they do not have enough time. This cannot be accepted either. God made the day to be twenty-four hours long, and every man has that same time allotment. We find in Acts 18 that Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, but found time to teach Apollos and others about their Redeemer. If they were able to make tents by hand and still have enough time to teach the Gospel, why is it that we cannot fit one study into our schedule?

CW

YOU NEVER MENTIONED HIM TO ME

Sam Dilbeck

Is there a someone you know that would make a great Christian? Obviously. It could be a relative, co-worker, friend or schoolmate. The point is that everyone knows someone that would make an outstanding servant of the Lord. The question that we really need to be asking is: Have you approached this person with the Gospel? If we really think that they would be great in His service, why have we not tried to teach them the Gospel of the Lord?

Many times in our lives we give up chances to share the Gospel message. Solomon wrote about missed opportunities in Ecclesiastes 11:1, 4:

Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. He that

There are other excuses that we use, but the bottom line is that God will not accept any of them. We are the earthen vessels that carry the Word of power to other men (2 Cor. 4:7). It is a fact that when opportunity meets ability, the result is responsibility. We need to quit trying to avoid the obligation we have and make time to teach others. Imagine the person you think would have been a great Christian in hell, saying, "You never mentioned Him to me."

Now, go teach him.

CW

BRING THEM BACK

Jimmy Ferguson

The book of James has been called the book of practical Christianity. Among other things, he writes about pure religion (chapter 1); the relationship of faith and works (chapter 2); the misuse of the tongue (chapter 3); the danger of being friends of the world (chapter 4); and the sin of holding grudges (chapter 5). In chapter five, he also talks about the physically sick. He said, "Is any sick among you? Let him call the elders of the church and let them pray over him" (verse 14). Then he concludes the chapter with a word about the spiritually sick. James makes it clear that it is possible for a brother or sister to wander from the truth. This "wandering" usually begins in one's mind (i.e., his thinking, his attitude). Then, it is seen in his life or day-to-day behavior. However, James says that it is possible to bring back a wayward brother or sister. Furthermore, when one brings the wayward back, he saves a soul from death and covers a multitude of sins (v. 20).

Will you be that someone? Will you be that brother or sister who is concerned enough to save a fellow Christian from spiritual death? Here is a simple test to determine your interest in others:

- 1. Am I presently trying to save a soul? Yes () No ()
- 2. Do I pray daily for specific souls that are lost, taking their names to the throne of God? Yes () No ()
- 3. Have I talked to someone about his/her soul within the past month? Yes () No ()
- 4. When someone obeys the gospel or is restored, do I make a special effort

to meet that person, or send a note of encouragement? Yes () No ()

- 5. Do I make a special effort to know personally all new members? Yes () No ()
- 6. Have I ever taken a new member "under my wing," to guide, encourage, and help him grow spiritually? Yes () No ()
- 7. Do I notice, and am I concerned when a member ceases to attend faithfully? Yes () No ()
- 8. Have I ever encouraged an unfaithful member to be restored? Yes () No ()

In the long ago, Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). Dear friends, we are our brother's keeper! Each of us has a personal responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Helping the saved remain saved is a great responsibility we all share as members of the body of Christ. Paul wrote, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). You may be the only one who can have a positive effect in the spiritual life of a fallen brother/sister. Won't you take that step? Your brother or sister may make it to heaven because of your encouraging word or deed. A sobering thought, isn't it!?

CW

LEARNING TO TEACH FROM THE MASTER TEACHER

Russell M. Kline

In ancient times, it was the prophet Elihu who said, concerning the Lord, "Who teacheth like him?" (Job 36:22). Indeed, who could possibly know better how to penetrate and mold the human mind than He who created it? Jesus set a perfect example before all of His people, concerning every aspect of living a faithful Christian life (1 Pet .2:21), and the realm of teaching is no exception. By studying the qualifications and methods of Jesus, the Master Teacher, we can learn how to make ourselves the very best teachers of God's Word that we can possibly be.

Qualifications of the Master Teacher

Jesus was on a mission from God. He was driven by a single-minded sense of purpose, saying things

like, “My meat is to do the will of him that (John 4:34; 12:27). The same ought to be true of teachers in the New Testament church (Eph. 4:11). Whether we are teachers of toddlers or senior citizens, all of us who teach others about the way of righteousness have been commanded to do so by God’s own Word (Matt. 28:19,20). The Bible says of all Christians, “ye ought to be teachers” (Heb. 5:12), and those of us who are ought to approach our work with the same sense of mission that Jesus felt.

Jesus understood His pupils. Jesus had super natural knowledge of the minds of every person He encountered (Matt. 9:4), a fact which only serves to emphasize the need for teachers to know something about the personal lives of their students. What religious education have they had, so far? What kind of an example is set before them, at home? What is their greatest spiritual need? In order to answer questions that every teacher must ask about his students, it may become necessary to get to know them personally. Why shouldn’t a teacher visit his students in their homes? This question is especially relevant to one who teaches adult Bible classes. Those who teach children ought to talk to the parents of their students, and find out how they can supplement the teaching that is being done at home. When teachers make an effort to get to know their pupils, it makes them better able to meet the needs of their students, and it makes a lasting impression upon parents.

Jesus knew the Scriptures. When Jesus was tempted by the Devil, He used Scripture to thwart temptation (Matt. 4). When His enemies tried to discredit Him, He used the Word of God to put down their arrogance (Matt. 19:3-6). Obviously, if a teacher is going to impart knowledge to his students, he must be in full possession of that knowledge. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

Jesus had wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge, tempered by experience. As the writer of Hebrews put it,

strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

Jesus is the source of all wisdom (James 1:5). He showed us that the wisdom of God is superior to the wisdom of man (1 Cor. 1:20, 25). The difference between a good teacher of the Bible, and a great teacher of the Bible is the number of lessons learned from practical experience.

Jesus taught with authority. Every word that Jesus spoke was the Word of God. Therefore, Jesus could

teach with a sense of authority unmatched by even the greatest teachers of His day (Mark 1:22). We can teach with that same sense of authority today, if our teaching is in harmony with the Word of God (Col. 3:17).

Jesus taught with consistency. Although His popularity rose and fell, throughout His life, Jesus’ teaching remained the same. He never changed His message to suit the likes and dislikes of the people. Those who really loved the Lord appreciated His consistency (John 6:67-69). Today, we must be consistent with our teaching, whether it is “in season,” or “out of season,” if we want to be pleasing to our Master Teacher (2 Tim. 4:2).

Jesus practiced what He preached. Jesus did not require of others that which He was not willing to do Himself. In fact, He often chastised the Pharisees for their hypocritical behavior, saying,

they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they will not move them with one of their fingers (Matt. 23:4).

Jesus set a perfect example of righteous behavior, for all of us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21). Those of us who are teachers must do the same for our students. Our students will not take us seriously, if they can see that we do not practice what we preach.

Methods of the Master Teacher

Jesus taught with parables. He did this, partly to confuse those who sought to twist His words, and discredit Him in the minds of His hearers (Matt. 13:10-17). Hundreds of years before Jesus spoke His first parable, Isaiah prophesied:

Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed (Isa. 6:9,10).

Only those who were genuinely searching for the truth would put any effort into deducing the meaning of a parable. On the other hand, the use of parables made it easy for those who were true disciples of Christ to remember the lessons He taught them, and to apply those lessons to their lives (Matt. 13:16). Today teachers of the law of Christ must learn to use parables as Jesus did, presenting modern students with

a memorable story to which they can easily relate, and from which they can learn a profound spiritual lesson.

Jesus used visual aids. On one occasion, He used a little child to teach His disciples an object lesson about humility (Matt. 18:1-6). On another occasion, Jesus pointed out the birds and the flowers to His disciples, to teach them an object lesson about the providence of God (Matt. 6:26-30). Often in His teaching, Jesus would use common objects to impress the lesson upon the minds of His students (Matt. 22:15-22). Today, it is commonly known that students remember much more of what they see in a classroom, than what they hear. Our challenge is to learn to use common, everyday objects in the presentation of our lessons, so that our students will not forget what we are trying to teach them.

Jesus asked questions. He asked them questions which caused them to think about deep spiritual concepts. Sometimes He would ask questions in order to start a conversation with someone (John 4:7). Sometimes He would ask questions to quicken a student's interest (Luke 13:18). Sometimes He would direct a student's thinking with a question (Matt. 7:3; 16:26). Sometimes He would ask questions to call for a decision (John 6:67; 11:26), or to make application (Matt. 16:13, 15). Sometimes the best way to get a sinner to question his own spiritual life is simply to ask him a few questions about what he believes.

Jesus taught by His example. As we have already noted, Jesus practiced what He preached. In every aspect of life, He left us "an example, ye [we] should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). He lived out His entire life on earth without ever having sinned, showing us that it can be done (Heb. 4:15). As teachers of the gospel of Christ, we must show our students what faithful Christian living looks like, both in and out of the classroom (Matt. 5:16). If we fail to teach our students to follow Christ by our example, we do them a great deal of harm.

There are many things to be learned about teaching from the Master Teacher. If we can apply what little knowledge we have gained from this brief study, we shall improve ourselves as teachers greatly. Even if we learn nothing else, let us strive to emulate the enthusiasm with which Jesus taught His disciples. Whether we are teachers of toddlers, or senior citizens, we are placed in a position of great power and responsibility over the lives of our students. May we never abuse our power, and may we never take our responsibility lightly.

CW

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commanded to display hospitality, and elders are to be proven in this qualification (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Our hospitality to others should never be the reason behind their Gospel obedience, but the lack thereof could be the reason they don't obey.

3. When the lost sit in our homes, HEARKEN: Everyone wants to be heard. James said, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (1:19). Spend a lot of time asking about their family, hobbies, past experiences, and things they enjoy. This is a time to find common ground and to develop friendship and trust. As you listen, take mental notes of things that may need emphasized during a study. Have they been divorced? Do they have any organized religious background? Do they have family who are devout in any particular religion?

4. When the lost say things for which we disagree, HESITATE: It is very IMPORTANT as you listen to never chase rabbits. This is not the time to refute, reprove, rebuke, or instruct, regardless of what is said. Remember, you are building a relationship. Furthermore, don't answer all their questions. I know this is a strange suggestion and may even seem rude. Believe me, it has taken a long time to understand the power of hesitation. If we truly respect the power of the Word, we must stop telling everyone what we think and how we FEEL and start SHOWING them the truth. The quicker we get someone into the Bible, the sooner God can begin working on their hearts. If someone says, "Why don't you use a piano in worship?" you need to say, "That is a great question, let me SHOW you!" This is an effective way to lead into a Bible study.

We literally have hundreds of thousands of untrained Christians in our pews. We still have enough soldiers to begin growing again. If a doctor found his patient hemorrhaging, he would act immediately to save his life. Congregations are hemorrhaging, and if we don't act now, we may need other countries to send missionaries here to reestablish the Lord's Church in America.

Rob, in cooperation of World Video Bible School and the Gospel Broadcasting Network has put together a new series training Christians how to be soul winners. It is a two volume set. If you are interested please send him an email at rnjh.whitacre@gmail.com. He also conducts Personal Evangelism seminars training churches how to conduct personal Bible studies.

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