

EVANGELISM:

how the whole church speaks of Jesus

Week 12—Actually Evangelizing! (Pt. 2)

Last week, we began to talk about our role as ambassadors for Christ. We have to make sure we are communicating the message of the gospel, being intentional to create and seize opportunities to have conversations that lead to the gospel. This requires boldness and clarity. In this lesson, we will talk about results.

Ambassadors must deliver the message and trust Christ with the response.

The author tells a story about a taxi ride he had from the Chicago O'Hare Airport. His Muslim taxi-driver talked his ear off about the differences between Christianity and Islam. When the author finally had opportunity to speak, he said, "You know something, Ibrahim? I agree that Muslims and Christians both believe that all sins are recorded, but the Muslim believes sins are weighed against good works, while the Christian believes Jesus offers forgiveness for sin through faith. That's what I think is the biggest difference. That's why I love Jesus: he doesn't weigh our sins against our good deeds; he forgives our sins because he paid for them." (108)

After the encounter, the author wished he had shared more. He wondered whether he should have left a bigger tip! Suddenly, the taxi stopped and began to back up. Had he received Jesus?! No. *The author had forgotten to get his credit card back.*

Many of our opportunities to share will end with disappointment. However, we have to make sure that we measure success not by the result of the conversation, but by our faithfulness to share the message and love the person we are sharing with.

Remember, faith is not something we can bestow:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph. 2:8-9)

Ambassadors must not lose heart.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:1, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart."

Question—Have you tried to share your faith with someone over and over again to the point that you've been tempted to give up? What did you do?

In these moments when we are tired and overwhelmed by the significance and hard work of evangelism, we can turn to the encouragement of Philemon 1:6—"and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." Paul's prayer is actually for the evangelist, not the evangelized. He prays that as we share our faith, we would grow in knowing Christ.

Sometimes we become so wrapped up in doing something for God that we forget that God is also doing something in us. "Part of my weariness in evangelism is the constant focus on what is supposed to happen in *others*. When that is my focus and nothing seems to happen, I lose heart" (112).

"In fact, I'm convinced that sharing our faith, regardless of the response, is a key to spiritual health for the individual and for the [church] community." (112)

It's important for us to realize that whether we get to see the time of harvest, we have to trust that God is doing something through our faithful witness. We have to believe the gospel is constantly at work:

"For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." (1 Thessalonians 2:11-13)