

Faithful Evangelism

“Joyful & energetic investment in and witness to lost people, motivated by God’s grace”

Do the following traits describe you?

Are these what people in your home church & your discipling relationships see in you?

Inward qualities which develop as our heart is *continually* being transformed by grace:

“Joyful” means... joyful. We don’t want believers building relationships with lost people out of a sense of guilt, burden or drudgery. We don’t want to see them resentful of how outreach invades their schedule. But rather we pray they experience a gradual increase of excitement and anticipation of God working in and through them in evangelism. And excitement especially as an opportunity to get with someone approaches.

“Energetic” The outward actions of regularly spending time with the lost and witnessing are driven by your heart which embraces His forgiveness and eternal destiny. In the Bible, we see words like “labor,” “striving” and “zealous” when associated with ministry but always associated with the Holy Spirit’s power enabling us.

Outward qualities: the actions of a faithful evangelist:

“Investment in” – the disciple of Jesus must be *with* the lost for God to bear fruit.

- A *lifestyle* of building relationships with lost people includes two parts. It begins by persistent and patient prayer for the lost in your life and those you may yet meet. And it includes taking the initiative by planning connecting, as well as being responsive to spontaneous opportunities. One can look at our/their schedule and see the priority placed on reaching those who don’t know Christ.

“Bold witness to lost people” – God asks through Paul: “How will they believe without hearing?” (Rom. 10:14) A faithful evangelist frequently broaches spiritual conversations with lost people to learn of their spiritual beliefs, and often leading to explaining the Gospel, invitations to Home Church and Central Teaching, or to pre-evangelistic events. The faithful evangelist does this whether feeling confident, or “in weakness, fear, & much trembling” like Paul when witnessing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2:3).

These qualities gradually increase as we grow in our understanding, appreciation & application of His grace.

We cannot conjure up the inner nor perform the outer qualities by our own power.

“Motivated by God’s grace” – The inward and outward qualities above result from and are empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is part of our daily and ongoing walk (Col. 1:5b-6; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; John 15; 1 Thess. 2:8-14; Rom 1:16) and is what the “Faithful Evangelism series” is all about.

God promises us that He will provide the joy, energy, and boldness to invest in and witness to lost people, if we walk in the light of His grace! When this describes our faithfulness in evangelism, He will bear fruit through us!

When?

We don’t know.

But He will bear fruit through us!

We should learn to take joy in faithfully building friendships with
and communicating the gospel to lost people
regardless of their response.

Spiritual Crushes

As I enter into an environment most likely dominated by lost people, I am in awe thinking of how God is drawing each individual to himself (*John 12:32: "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."*). The fact that I could play a role in maybe just one person's salvation, or even be nothing more than a small stepping stone in their path to eternal life is exciting! This anticipation is met with the reality of what little I have to offer and unless I pray I crumble in fear. Thankfully, it is God who supplies everything needed to reach his lost children (*John 6:44, Romans 8:11, 1 Cor 12:10*).

I ask God for a leading as to who he wants me to focus on within a certain group. Once I have an idea of who this might be, I call this individual my "spiritual crush." It really is like a crush! I ask God to remind me of that person throughout the day, every day, as much as possible (*1 Thes 5:17*). Like a middle school child who can't get that cutie out of her head, I ask to be reminded to pray for this person every time he or she pops into my mind. I send up a little prayer for God to soften their heart. Sometimes this is a two second prayer: "Lord, you love them more than I could imagine. Show them that today!" Or, if I'm in the car or waiting in line, maybe I have a full minute to think about how God may already be convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (*John 16:8: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment"*). I pray for God to continue His promised conviction in specific ways or in that specific moment. Whatever the prayers look like, long or short, general or specific, it all adds up! I am often surprised how many 10 second periods throughout the day God can give me to lift His people up! Sometimes having things, places, or activities that remind me of my crush are helpful too. For example, every time I am stuck at a red light, I might be reminded to pray for my crush.

One of the things I find most encouraging in life is watching God's work on my crush's heart. I have had crushes where each time I speak with them I can see clearly how God has moved them closer to salvation. This may be Him having softened their heart, giving them understanding no human could have ever explained, or growing their desire for spiritual things. This is direct evidence of prayer and such a unifying thing for my relationship with God!

Picking a crush also comes about through prayer. This may be someone you would never see yourself relating to, but maybe God has put them in your path for a reason. It is possible that very natural, easy conversations and initial fondness towards someone could be God pointing them out to you. You may even find someone pursuing you and initiating conversation. Another sign of a potential crush might be running into him multiple times or spending a lot of time with him coincidentally. The good news is you can't crush on the wrong person. God loves all of his children and they can all use prayer, no matter what their spiritual lives do or don't look like.

At times I don't feel like I get a certain leading and so I crush on a small group of people and narrow it down later. Most commonly, God has shown me who is open through conversation about their lives. People with obvious needs or those who recognize their needs and emptiness are often susceptible to the gospel. Generally speaking, our culture does not know how to listen and people often need to process their lives with someone. We usually just need a loving friend who genuinely cares about what is going on with us! Whether his life is similar to yours, or seemingly better or worse, we can relate to everything through Christ's compassion (*2 Cor 1:3-4*). Whatever he may be struggling with, we can respond with a question like "that sounds like a lot to handle, how do you cope with all of that?" This can become a natural transition into the gospel either by your own testimony ("the only thing I've found any hope/comfort/satisfaction in is God..."), or by admitting

you have nothing to offer him, but God does. At this point I often like to brag about the gospel- show immense enthusiasm about the unbelievably great gift God offers us. I often talk about everything God offers us in life and the way He has helped me, but in such a way where I am just telling him my experience and what I know to be true. He cannot argue my experience and oftentimes will ask questions or open doors for more spiritual conversation. If he does not further the spiritual conversation, it may be best to simply drop the topic as he may have heard more than he wanted at this point.

If he does allow the spiritual conversation to continue, however, this is a good time to say something like “you seem somewhat interested in all this (you may need to insert here: “I know you don’t believe in God...” or “I know you’ve had a bad experience with church...”) I am part of a bible study I think you would really enjoy checking out.” Now, he is likely going to associate your invitation with everything he has ever experienced or heard about church. It is important to distinguish your Bible study from what he is probably thinking. You could say, “It is really laid back; one of my friends reads a passage, explains it and then asks discussion questions for anyone who *volunteers* to say something. Then afterwards we hang out, drink beer, play cards, play basketball etc. (fill in with what your group does that you think may specifically attract him).”

Not everyone will recognize a need in their life or be even remotely open to the gospel or a Bible study. Crushing on whoever you feel led to, or simply would like to, is *never* ineffective. We know that God does not dismiss our prayers for his beloved to come into a relationship with him (1 John 5:14-15). We will never know on earth the extent of our prayers’ impact in another’s life. If you get to have a spiritual conversation or give the gospel, praise God! If not, you got to selflessly serve and contribute to God’s plan of bringing them closer to salvation.

Crushes can come and go too (remember middle school?). God may bring crushes in and out of your life. Being faithful to what’s before you, asking to be used in prayer, and fighting for their souls is the most important thing! I used to feel really defeated when I would crush on someone for a long time, never have a spiritual conversation or any progression, and eventually lose touch with them. My results-focused mentality and self-reliance were shown to me when one extremely hostile crush, with whom I had never had a spiritual conversation, randomly reentered my life. I crushed on her even more than before and eventually she accepted Christ and I was privileged to disciple her. God works behind the scenes! Stay faithful with those God puts on your heart. Let the prayers build!

It is funny how oftentimes after I’ve been crushing on someone for a while, I feel a little off (for example depressed, sick or distracted) before seeing my crush. I attribute this directly to Satan and have to take the initiative before each time I interact with them to free my mind from distraction and go forth on God’s power alone. The good news is that every time that happens, it is solid confirmation that I am faithfully irritating the evil one!

Can you fail? No. God does not measure things in success or failure but in faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Our primary purpose here on earth is to glorify God (*Isaiah 43:7: “everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*). When we are successfully doing this for His glory alone, we will be relying on his power, and leaving the results in His hands.