

Leadership Principles & the Pastoral Epistles – 2015
WEEK 9: DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

Interpretive comments on 2 Tim. 4:5

The context that motivates evangelism

What comes into your mind when you think about motivating others to engage in evangelism?

The New Testament letters to churches are instructive in how the apostles motivated their churches in this area.¹ The three main sections of these letters (in order) are:

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Grounding Christians deeply in God's grace (Col. 1:5-3:4) motivates them to serve God and love people in all areas (including evangelism) in a way that nothing else can.

“If, in your own mind, you have limited your need for the gospel, you will hardly identify with sinners in obvious need of saving grace. You feel removed from them, as you feel removed from the full impact of the gospel. The distance you feel from both the message and those who need to hear it soon disengages you altogether from the enterprise of evangelism . . .

A daily awareness that we must never stray from (the gospel) ourselves is the most important element in a God-honoring evangelism. As I experience the gospel as a message of a righteous God's total forgiveness, and Christ as the magnetic, personal center of my life, evangelizing with a gospel of forgiveness is a natural and inevitable outgrowth. It breaks down my blinding pride; it reminds me of what our God of love has done for me . . . Having been humbled ourselves by our own *present* need, we approach the lost person with a new welcoming attitude . . . We will not be trying to do something alien to us. Personal witness will issue from our delight in God and appreciation of His grace in Jesus Christ. We will be able to receive strangers as friends . . .”²

¹ This pattern is very evident in this order Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter. It is there in a slightly different order in Philipppians. Paul also emphasizes the first and third elements of this pattern in all three of the Pastoral Epistles. This relationship is explicit in Acts 2:42-47—God added to their number as they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to quality community and had favor with all the people.

² C. John Miller, *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1997), 44, 45.

“The gospel produces a constellation of traits in us. First, we are compelled to share the gospel out of generosity and love, not out of guilt. Second, we are freed from fear of being ridiculed or hurt by others, since we already have the favor of God by grace. Third, there is a humility in our dealings with others, because we know we are saved only by grace alone, not because of our superior insight or character. Fourth, we are hopeful about anyone, even the ‘hard cases,’ because we (ourselves) were saved only because of grace, not because we were likely people to become Christians. Fifth, we are courteous and careful with people. We don’t have to push or coerce them, for it is only God’s grace that saves them, not our eloquence or persistence or even their openness.”³

Exhorting Christians to be highly engaged in Body-life (Col. 3:12-16) motivates an evangelistic lifestyle for three reasons:

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“God’s plan is that local bodies of believing Christians . . . provide a dynamic community in which both personal witness and evangelistic communication become intensely productive. The church that convinces people that there is a God is a church that manifests what only a God can do, that is, to unite human beings in love . . . There is nothing that convinces people that God exists or that awakens their craving for him like the discovery of Christian brothers and sisters who love one another . . . The sight of loving unity among Christians arrests the non-Christian. It crashes through his intellect, stirs up his conscience and creates a tumult of longing in his heart because he was created to enjoy the very thing that you are demonstrating.”⁴

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Exhorting Christians to representing Jesus well in their social roles (Col. 3:17-4:2), to pray regularly for opportunities to share the gospel (Col. 4:2-4), and to make the most of these opportunities (Col. 4:5,6) are key features of a healthy evangelistic lifestyle.

Along with this foundational emphasis, we should *also* initiate practical ways to facilitate outreach (e.g., outreach events, teaching practical evangelistic principles, etc.).

Championing evangelism as a leader

Within the above context, we should do our best to champion evangelism among our people. In Phil. 1,2, Paul discloses some of the key elements of this powerful ministry.

Express genuine excitement about their efforts to spread the gospel (1:3-7).

³ Tim Keller, “Practical Dimensions of Gospel Application” (no publisher)

⁴ John White, *The Fight* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 149,150.

Share your own recent experiences in sharing Christ, emphasizing God's sovereign involvement (1:12-14).

Report and rejoice in the spread of the gospel through other imperfect Christians (1:14-18).

Challenge them to be witnesses and remind them of God's promise to help them (2:12-16).

- Notice that the emphasis is on being good witnesses—not on how people respond to our witness. Why is it so important to remind ourselves and others of this?

For more on the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, see Gary DeLashmutt, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism."

Exhort other Christians who are exemplary in spreading the gospel (2:19-30).

Pray for them and with them with an evangelistic "bottom line" (1:9-11).

What helps to keep our home group prayer meetings focused in a healthy way on evangelism?