

Urban Legends 2

Evangelism Is For Extroverts

When you hear the word “evangelist” or “evangelism” what comes to mind? For some people, the first thing they think of when they hear “evangelist” is some guy in a fancy suit on TV begging for money and promising miracles.

A couple of months ago Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, released a report on 6 notable televangelists. It’s an interesting report. You can read it online. Some of these guys are paying themselves and their families millions of dollars and live in multi-million dollar homes.

So maybe when you hear “evangelist” you think of a guy in a white Armani suit racking in cash.

Other people may get a different idea in their minds. Maybe the first thing that comes to your mind is someone like Billy Graham. Billy Graham wasn’t about raising money, he was about raising up spiritual children. Mr. Graham had a calling and a mission to preach the message of Jesus to as many people as possible. For almost 60 years God used Billy Graham to hold crusades around the world. It’s estimated that 2.2 billion people have been touched in some way by Graham and his ministries.

So maybe when you hear “evangelist” or “evangelism” you think of a guy with a thunderous voice speaking to thousands of people in a stadium.

Still other people might remember some guy they saw with a sandwich board sign and a bull horn standing on a street corner shouting about the end of the world and how people need to repent.

So maybe when you hear “evangelist” or “evangelism” you think of a street corner preacher with wild eyes hollering while people pass by.

Words like “evangelist” and “evangelism” can conjure up all kinds of images in our minds. But what if I were to tell you this morning that God wants you to be an evangelist? How would that sit with you?

This is week 6 in our Urban Legends series and what we’ve been doing is trying to unwrap some spiritual urban legends that can cause real confusion in our minds.

As we’ve navigated through these spiritual myths we’ve seen that whenever we buy

into a myth, we miss out on the truth God has for us. Well, the idea that evangelism can't be for us because we don't fit the idea that we have in our minds, is one of those damaging urban legends.

So we're going to begin this way this morning...

I. Let The Bible Define Terms

What's really interesting is that while words like "evangelist" and "evangelism" might be common to us, they're not so common in the Bible.

In fact, all our major English translations are pretty much the same when it comes to these words. The words "evangelize" and "evangelism" are never used in our English translations.

Instead here's what you find. **Turn to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4 page 1148**

God has given certain spiritual gifts, or spiritual enablements, to the church. In Ephesians 4 we're also told how God has given certain gifted individuals to the church.

Read verses 11-12

Here's the word that used in our English Bibles, "evangelists." That word is only used three times.

The word "evangelist" is a translation of the Greek noun *euaggelistes*. It comes from the verb *euaggelizo* which is a compound word made up of *eu* which means "good" and *aggelos* which means "messenger."

So an "evangelist" is some one who brings the good message or the good news. When you see the phrase "preach the gospel" in the New Testament it's a translation of that verb *euaggelizo*.

So an "evangelist" is literally someone who goodnewsizes. An evangelist is someone who in some way spreads the good news of Jesus Christ.

Let me just define one more thing. What is the good news of Jesus Christ?

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also

you received and in which you stand...For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:1,3-4)

The good news of Jesus Christ is that He died for our sins and rose again. That's the essence of the gospel.

We're sinners who need a savior and Jesus Christ is that savior.

John 3:16 has been called the gospel in a nutshell. It says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

So an evangelist is a person who is ready and able to give out the simple message of salvation in Jesus.

I. Let The Bible Define Terms

II. Let The Bible Direct Us

Turn to II Timothy 4 page 1169

II Timothy is a letter written by an apostle to a young believer in Jesus named Timothy. The apostle warns Timothy that not everyone will want to hear the truth. Then he says this is what Timothy needs to do...

Read verse 5

Notice, he doesn't say, "Timothy, if you're one of those guys with the gift of evangelism you need to get out there and share the good news." He simply says, *do the work of an evangelist.*

That word "work" is also translated "behavior, action, and deed."

For a person who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, they're behavior, their lifestyle should be to evangelize.

Here's the thing about spiritual gifts. While there are spiritual gifts mentioned in the

Bible and those with specific gifts will be better at their gifted areas than the rest of us, the Bible tells us to all get in the game.

There's a gift of mercy. Does that mean that the only people God wants to be merciful are the people with the gift of mercy? Of course not. God wants us all to be merciful.

There's a gift of encouragement, but we are all supposed to encourage each other. There's a gift of faith, but we are supposed to live by faith. There's a gift of giving but we're all supposed to give generously.

And in the same way there's a gift of evangelism, but God wants us all sharing the good news.

In fact, back in Ephesians 4 it says, *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Even evangelists equip the saints for the work of the ministry. How does that happen? When I hang out with someone who has the gift of giving I learn how to be more generous. When I hang out with someone like Fred Kornis, who has the gift of evangelism, I learn how to more naturally and effectively share my faith.

Here's what God really wants for His people.

Turn to Acts 1 page 1069

This is a challenge that Jesus gives His disciples before He ascends back into heaven. I want you to see this one and one more.

Read verse 8

The Holy Spirit came upon them and since that time every believer in Jesus has the Holy Spirit's power.

That power allowed them, and us, to be witnesses. What's a witness? It's someone who just tells what they know. It's some one who gives testimony.

Here's what the Bible directs us to do. We're to let other people know the good news of Jesus. We're to share what Jesus Christ has done for us.

You say, “But Ed, I’m shy. I can’t talk to people. This whole witnessing thing is for people like Fred Kornis who are extroverts.”

Let’s look at Acts 1:8 again. “All you extroverts shall receive power.” Is that what it says? All you pastors, you missionaries, you public speakers, you outgoing people-persons?

It’s just you. It’s just me. Believers receive God’s power. And here’s the most important point of all...

Listen to this, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.* (Romans 1:16)

This isn’t about you and your personality. It isn’t about you and your finely tuned theological systems. This isn’t about you and your oratory abilities. It’s about God’s message of hope and the Holy Spirit’s power to change lives.

The gospel is the power of God to salvation. The Holy Spirit’s the one who makes us witnesses. We don’t go out witnessing. We are witnesses.

The Bible directs us to share our faith. Jesus said, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” (Matthew 4:19) We may think we’re following Christ but if we’re not “fishing for men,” if we’re not being witnesses, we’re just fooling ourselves.

I. Let The Bible Define Terms

II. Let The Bible Direct Us

III. Let The Bible Instruct Us

There are so many ways to get out the good news. We just heard from Rob Clemmons about the Gideons. The Gideons are both looking for, and actively creating, opportunities to get out the message of Jesus.

A lot of what they do involves getting the Word of God into the hands of people.

We support some missionaries who serve in closed countries. That means they can’t publicly preach or teach so they spend their time establishing solid relationships with people and out of those relationships come the opportunities to talk about their faith.

On the other hand Fred Kornis loves to set up a sketch board in a public place and tell the story of Jesus Christ to strangers on the street.

Dean Chollar serves people by everything from drilling wells to caring for orphans but always coupling that with proclaiming the good news of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

I just heard about a small group of believers who have a half-price appetizer ministry. I've sparked some guys' interest here already! They go to restaurants and bars that have half-price appetizers, go and eat the appetizers, but with the goal of meeting people. They have had one opportunity after another of engaging people in spiritual discussions or inviting them to church.

The variety of ways is endless. But there's one thing the people doing them have in common. They all have decided to live intentional lives, praying daily that God would put people who are searching in their path, and asking for God's wisdom to see the openings for evangelism when they happen.

Turn to John 4 page 1044

Evangelism is all about communication. So the wisest thing would be for us to learn from the Great Communicator. You say, "I didn't know Ronald Regan was in the Bible."

He's not. We're going to look at the greatest communicator, that was Jesus. He's the Word who became flesh. Everything about Him was geared to communicate God's message.

John 4 takes place in Samaria. (Map slide) Samaria is in the middle with Judea (which is where Jerusalem is) to the south and Galilee to the north.

The Jews and the Samaritans despised each other. Way back in 720 BC the Assyrians conquered Samaria. They carried numbers of people away captive and brought in their own people to live there. That's how you ensured that there wouldn't be a rebellion later. The Jews that were left intermarried with the Assyrians and so the rest of Israel considered them half-breeds.

At the time of Christ a good Jew on his way from Judea to Galilee would walk around Samaria. If they did walk through they would shake the dust off their sandals so that

they didn't defile Jewish land with Samaritan dust!

Against that backdrop are the events of this chapter. Jesus is crossing through Samaria. He's hanging out by a well and His disciples are in town trying to come up with dinner.

Read verse 6

Jesus is tired, hungry, and thirsty but we're going to see that He lived an intentional life. He was a witness. He was always ready to be that witness. He could have said, "I've been ministering to hundreds of people. I'm hungry. I'm tired. I don't feel like talking to anybody."

But He didn't say that.

We can always be ready. We can always be aware. But too many times we become preoccupied with our own situation.

Read verse 7-9

Jesus was a teacher. He had a reputation to uphold. No self-respecting Jew would talk to a Samaritan. To top it all off this was a woman and Jewish men didn't talk to women alone.

There was even a group of Jewish religious leaders called "The Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees." They were so concerned with being pure that they closed their eyes when they saw a woman and often ran into doors and walls.

Jesus not only looks at this woman but He talks to her. He risks His reputation. As it turns out this woman had been divorced 5 times and now was living with a guy. Culturally she would have been right up there with the chief of sinners.

It takes a lot more work to build bridges than to build walls. Jesus was a bridge builder. He was called the friend of sinners and had an impact on people "the church" of His day completely overlooked.

I have to wonder if she hadn't met Jesus' disciples just a short time ago. She was probably coming down the hill that leads from her town of Sychar to Jacob's well while the disciples were headed into town.

You can bet they didn't get off the path to make way for a Samaritan woman.

But Jesus was willing to be different. Jesus didn't make value judgments about who was worthy or who would or wouldn't be interested like we tend to do.

Read 10-12

You got to say this about Jesus. He knew how to peak people's interest. He knew how to get their attention.

In the vernacular of the day "living water" was running water. Running water was always preferred but this was well water, not running water.

So in effect she's saying to this upstart Rabbi, "Are you offering me pure running water? Where are you going to get it? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well 1500 years ago. Are you saying you're greater than he is?"

Read verses 13-15

Earlier, Jesus had had a conversation with a well-educated Jewish leader named Nicodemus. In both cases he talked about things that people could relate to. Jesus just used ordinary stuff in life to illustrate spiritual truth; being born, drinking water.

He didn't jump in with some big theological discussion that was beyond them. He started with where they were.

He started with the familiar and He worked his way out from there.

Now look what comes next. **Read verses 16-18**

What was that all about? The ultimate need that everyone has isn't water, it isn't bread, it isn't anything physical at all. The ultimate need that everyone has, is to be forgiven of sin. If you don't have that need taken care of, nothing else really matters.

Here's another great lesson from Jesus. He was careful to adapt His message to the individual.

When Jesus spoke to hardened, self-righteous, religious people, who didn't see their own sin, He came down hard. He stressed their sinfulness because self-righteous

people don't see their own sin. They see everybody else's sin but they don't see their own.

So this is what He said to the Pharisees; *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.* (Matthew 23:27)

Sometimes you've got to just have to shake people up a little and get their attention.

But that wasn't the way Jesus spoke to people on the street. Case in point. This woman needed a reminder of her own personal sin, but she didn't need a sermon on it.

She was like most of the people we're going to interact with. She didn't need to be convinced of her sin, just reminded. So when Jesus said, "Go call your husband," she recoiled. He touched a nerve without saying one word of condemnation.

Jesus didn't want to beat her up. He just wanted her to face herself. Like we said last week, if you don't see your need of something you don't go for it. If you don't know you're sick, you don't go to the doctor. If you don't know you're lost, you don't get directions.

The doctor doesn't do tests so she can torture you with the results. If she thinks there's something wrong she does tests to confirm your need of treatment.

Jesus said just enough to cause this woman to see her own identity as a sinner. And as she did she began to realize something about Jesus.

Read verse 19

The lights are coming on. A few minutes ago she was wrapped up in her own life, going about her own business and now suddenly she's been confronted with her spiritual need. She's a thirsty sinner who needs the water of life.

That's everyone of us without Jesus. That's what we want people to see.

Now look what happens next because it's really instructive.

Read verse 20

We're not going to take time this morning to go into the whole religious difference between Jews and Samaritans but I want you to see this because it happens so often.

The lights are beginning to come on for her about who Jesus is and about her own personal sin and what happens? She tries to change the subject.

She asks a religious question. It might have been a sincere question but it was going to steer the conversation away from the uncomfortable discussion about her sin.

This will happen all the time when we're just trying to share our faith with someone. So what does Jesus do? He stays on the subject.

Read verses 23-24

Jesus answers without leaving the subject. He says, "It's not where you worship but who you worship that counts."

People have a lot of questions about Christianity. Some of these questions are totally legitimate. If we don't know the answer we should say, "I'm not sure. That's a good question. I'll do my best to find an answer and get back to you."

If we do know the answer we should say it, but always with this goal. Not to put somebody else down or make them feel stupid for asking. Not to "wow" them with our superior knowledge, but to point them to the Savior.

So she says in verse 25 **(Read)**

Now look at this.. Read verse 26

Here's the point to all this. Jesus could have stood on a street corner with a sign that said, "Repent, the end is near," and she would have thought, "That's weird."

Jesus could have walked up to her and said, "I'm the Messiah and you're a sinner," and she would have gone to another well.

Instead, He quietly and patiently engaged the woman where she was, He gently but intentionally helped her sin her need. And then He brought her to the place where she had to make a decision, What would she do with Jesus?

In the end she runs back to town and brought a whole bunch of people with her.

Jesus own disciples went into town and all they came back with is carry-out from the Chinese place.

But verse 39 says, *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman.*

Is evangelism just for extroverts? Is it only for preachers in stadiums? Is it just for pastors and missionaries?

Evangelism is for you. The Bible is our guide. Jesus is our example. The Holy Spirit is our power,

You say, “Ed, I’m still not sure how. I’m not sure what to say.” We have classes every couple of months designed to equip you. The next one’s Saturday June 11. Put it on your calendar.

But this week, begin by praying that God would show you opportunities that you can use to just say a simple word for Him. Start simple. But be faithful and watch how God grows you in confidence and faith.