

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

## EVANGELISM—WHOSE JOB IS IT?

One of the touchiest subjects to tackle in terms of writing or preaching is the subject of evangelism. To broach the subject for many is to make the assumption that some brethren are not doing enough in the way of evangelism. One preacher who was asked during the hiring process about his approach to personal work responded, "I believe that personal work is—personal." In this particular case, this reflected reluctance on his part to engage in any formal evangelistic effort. There is nothing inherently wrong with that approach. After all, the great commission commands us to "go," without being specific as to what methods we use to reach the lost once we get there, as long as the saving gospel is preached to them. Yet, too often, the work of evangelism within the local congregation is a work that falls through the crack.

The fact is—evangelism is a difficult work. It is not easy to approach people concerning spiritual matters. It is not easy to approach strangers and at times it may be even more difficult to approach those we know for fear of jeopardizing our relationship with them. It has been said that politics and religion are the two most polarizing and sensitive subjects on earth. Most people who claim to be religious believe that what they are doing is the right thing. To even insinuate to someone that they are a member of an illegitimate religious body, that is practicing things that are not Scripturally authorized, often provokes anger and/or a defensive posture. Not being comfortable or being equipped to handle that kind of confrontation, most people simply avoid it.

The problem with avoidance is that we have a mandate to evangelize. We have a clear directive from the Lord Jesus Christ to "Go," (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Unfortunately, there are those even among us who deny that the Great Commission applies to modern day Christians, claiming that Jesus' command was limited to the apostles. However, we have several biblical examples of those who went other than the apostles. Those in Jerusalem who faced persecution fled from their homes yet still managed to evangelize, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). If there were any person or persons who had a built-in excuse for *not* evangelizing, it was those who were driven from their homes through this widespread persecution. Others such as Barnabas, Mark, Luke, Silas, Timothy and many more accompanied the apostle Paul in his various journeys throughout the world for the purpose of bringing the gospel to the previously uninformed Gentiles. It is interesting to note that while the Jewish Christians were scattered, the twelve apostles remained behind for a time in Jerusalem, presumably recognizing that there was still much work to be done there. Eventually they also left Jerusalem and traveled throughout the world preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Luke recorded that this was to begin in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47), but by no means would it end there.

Today, many brethren consider evangelism to be one of the components of the preacher's job. While they are correct in asserting this, this does not absolve them from participating as well. Every Christian has an obligation to help in bringing forth the harvest. Jesus rightly declared, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). Although most of these brethren who would contend that this is solely the job of the preacher would not be so bold as to declare themselves exempt; their action (or rather their inaction) speaks louder than words.

Why are there so few laborers to go into the harvest? There are several reasons—one of them being fear. Fear of rejection, fear of someone being mean to them, fear of someone accusing them of being judgmental, fear of scorn and ridicule. True, there are

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

**5 VIEWS OF MARK 16:16**

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no guarantees that people will respond favorably to overtures concerning the subject of salvation and eternity, in fact some people can be quite annoyed at such overtures, yet this is not a valid excuse for refraining from entering into the harvest. All of these fears were things that the Lord Jesus actually experienced and yet He did so to provide salvation for mankind.

Another reason is lack of knowledge. Some brethren fall back on the time-honored excuse: "I simply do not know enough to engage anyone in conversation about these matters." While this may be a valid reason for a babe in Christ, it is most definitely not a valid reason for a seasoned Christian. Some brethren have been using this excuse for years, even decades, an indication that not only do they not have the adequate knowledge, but that they have no intention of acquiring such knowledge. How can one follow the instruction of the apostle Paul to "know how...to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6), unless they know what the Bible teaches and can articulate it to others? God demonstrated His displeasure with those who had a lack of knowledge where He is concerned and spoke of His displeasure through the prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6). Are there brethren today who reject knowledge simply to avoid going forth into the harvest? Even the babes in Christ are expected to learn so that they may grow (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14) and take their rightful place in the Lord's vineyard.

Still another reason that brethren provide for shirking the harvest is "I'm too busy. They are too busy with work, school, family, etc. Sadly, they are also too busy with secular pursuits such as hobbies, sports, civic activities, et al. God recognizes that we have certain responsibilities that we must honor; in fact, God has directed that we live as honorable people by fulfilling our obligations; nevertheless the fulfillment of those obligations does not give anyone a free pass from working in the Lord's vineyard. Simply saying, "I've got to work" (in their secular job) or "We have planned this family outing," *every time* there is an evangelistic effort does not absolve them from participating in the work of the local church. Brethren who make these excuses ultimately have to answer to God, Who is going to demand an accounting of their stewardship. One day God is going to require an answer as to why their physical labor was more important than their spiritual labor.

How can we evangelize? The most effective way is to

MORE ABOUT JESUS

Recently I heard about a preacher who received the complaint that he preached about Jesus “too much!” Can you imagine such a statement? Is it truly possible to talk about Jesus too much? Granted, there are a lot of topics, themes, scriptures, etc. that need to be taught and preached with the expectation of proclaiming all the counsel of God (Acts 20:28); however, I could not ever imagine actually leveling the accusation against another that they preached about Jesus “too much.” Friends, if anything we do not talk about Jesus enough. His life was perfect, His words are truth, His ways are right, and His will is pure. Jesus is everything we aspire to be and everything we should be teaching and preaching to others that they need to be. Therefore, instead of complaining about someone talking too much about Jesus, we should be seeking to learn and know more about Jesus: “more of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for me!”

What could hurt by learning more about Jesus’ **life**? Contained in the four gospel accounts containing Jesus’ biographical information is merely a small portion of all that Jesus actually did. “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). There is so much about Jesus life that we cannot know because it is not recorded, why would we not hunger and thirst to learn about and know every detail we can know that is recorded of His life? We can learn how He handled difficult decisions, how He related to individuals, how He confronted Biblical discussions, and how He dealt with sin and temptation. Would this information not help us as we deal with the same? We need to know more about Jesus’ life.

Why would we not seek to learn more about Jesus’ **love**? How much did He love? He “so loved.” Who did He love? He loved “the world.” Why did He love? He loved so that “all that believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It is that love that constrains us to seek and serve Him every day of our lives (2 Corinthians 5:14). It motivates us to shun the pressures of the world and live in accordance to His ways and will (Romans 12:1-2). Ultimately it is that love that is going to save our eternal souls once this life ends. Knowing how important the presence of God’s love in our lives is, why would we not seek to learn and know more about it? We need to know more about Jesus’ love.

When would it not benefit us to learn more about Jesus’ **legacy**? Just before His departure back to the Father, Jesus stated that “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” (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus was not giving a commandment that He had been unwilling or refused to perform in His life. He, rather, was delegating this responsibility that He had been performing on to others upon His departure. His legacy to mankind was redemption through obedience to the gospel. However, if we know nothing of it, how can we be responsive to it? We need to know more about Jesus’ legacy.

No, not less about Jesus; we need to learn and know more about Jesus. More about His life, His love, and His legacy. Only by that Scriptural study can we truly obtain the knowledge of all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

-Andy Brewer

[www.andybrewer.blogspot.com](http://www.andybrewer.blogspot.com)

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cultivate the relationships that we already have. Family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, golfing partners, club members and more are all potential converts. They know us, they like us, and they trust us. If we cultivate that relationship, they will come to believe that we have their best interest at heart, even if they disagree with us theologically and/or philosophically. We need to use that trust to our advantage; after all, what we are sharing with them is the greatest gift ever given. Listen to those who came out of denominationalism and have expressed their gratitude that someone cared enough to reach out to them.

Another way to evangelize is simply to approach people and try to engage an interest in spiritual matters. This is not nearly as effective because of the trust issue. Yet, we must make an effort from time to time to reach out to the lost despite our negative feeling about how effective we are. Evangelism, without exception, is the job of every Christian. If we want to claim the rest that Jesus offers (Matthew 11:28), we must be willing laborers in His vineyard.

-Randy Robinson