

Evangelization 101

Prayer

Good morning my friends. How many of you have experienced a preaching style like mine before?

Did you notice that very frequently I pose questions for you to consider instead of just stating a point?

Why?

There are several reasons actually:

- The first is that it makes the sermon interactive, you become involved in the thinking process
- The second is that it keeps your focus on the topic as you think about what is being said instead of mentally channel surfing
- The third and most important is that this is what Jesus did!

Did you know that in the Gospels Jesus asked is 183 questions?

Did you know that he only answered three of those questions out right?

Did you know that when asked the questions in the Gospels, Jesus used questions to guide a person in the thinking process? In fact, Jesus asked 307 questions back when he was asked for an answer...

You see you can tell somebody something and they may or may not receive what you have said as valid or factual, but if you walk them through the thought process and they come to the conclusion themselves. In this way, the concept presented is always received. This is because the person has been lead to the proposed conclusion.

I preach this way because when Jesus wanted to connect with the people and related the good news, this is what he did. It has been said that Jesus never held Q&A sessions he held Q&Q sessions.

Albert Einstein once said that he never taught his students anything, he provided the environment and conditions in which they could learn. This is what Jesus did.

This leads me to my first point about evangelism:

Can we create curiosity in the unsaved about Jesus and the gospels?

YES! We can do this be imitating what Jesus did, we can ask intriguing questions that will cause our friends and acquaintances to examine their lives from new

perspectives that we present in the form of questions. Jesus asked and encouraged questions from those listening to him.

Here are some examples of this type of question:

- Do you think our lives here on this planet have any meaning?
- What do you think that meaning might be? In short, why are we here?
- Have you ever had a spiritual experience? What happened?
- Have you ever seen a sign that you couldn't explain that might have come from God?
- What would you do if God sent you a sign?
- Could there be a God out there?
- If you think God may exist, what do you think God is like?
- Has anyone you know had a God experience? How did that affect them?

What about stories are they useful in evangelization?

Jesus thought so... He told 46 parables.

When Jesus went out he told stories. But his stories usually had an unusual twist that would lead a person into a new way of thinking. Consider with me the Prodigal Son. The father let the son have enough rope to discover and come to value what he had lost. Kind of like God the Father giving us enough time to discover we need him. Then we see that the decision of the prodigal son led to consequences. Note that the father didn't interfere with his decision, yet the decision held consequences. No matter what the son did, when the son returned to him the father loved the son. The father separated the sin from the sinner and loved the individual. The father was all about restoration. We look at the elder son who felt self-righteous in his life and took the father for granted, he did not want to let his sinful brother back into the family as this restored brother would once again become a part of the inheritance. He would not attend the celebration for his brother because he was more concerned about his appearance, his righteousness and his property than loving his brother. This is a warning to those who are saved not to become secure in salvation by their own works instead of the grace of the father.

Jesus used this story (Parable) to teach the following lessons:

- The Father will not interfere with our decisions, but decisions have consequences.
- No matter what we have done or how far we have fallen from grace, our father waits for us to welcome us back into his presence and bestow upon us a rich inheritance
- If we are self-righteous we are not Jesus righteous and we will put our focus on the wrong things.

How about the landowner who paid the employees who came near the end of the workday the same as those who started early in the morning? Jesus was telling us that whether we come to him in our early years or our later years, when we come into his kingdom we receive all his promises and a full inheritance in him..

Jesus did things contrary to the thinking of the day...

Jesus actions flew in the face of social conventions of the time. He ate with the publicans, tax collectors and the sinners. Remember tax collectors worked for the Roman oppressors and Publicans are the individuals who run pubs.

Jesus spoke of his imminent death and yet went to meet it in Jerusalem, in full knowledge of what was to happen

What does this teach us about evangelism?

We too can witness by acting counter culturally.

Consider those who are faithful to their spouses and maintain the commitment of their wedding vows. How about assisting homeless or needy people without condemnation or condescension. How about the most powerful witness of all... What about those who live a self-sacrificial life and give their time to helping others?

When I consider Mother Teresa...

She was a woman who simply loved people. She had nothing of value of her own, yet was rich beyond imagining. She has made such an impact on this world by simply loving people and living a servant life to God that you here today know whom I am talking about...

Did you know that when she was praying several times people had to pull her down as she would rise off of the floor enraptured in the presence of God.

Now we all know that we are not saved by works, we are saved by Christ alone, yet we are called to do good works, because they glorify our Father who is in heaven.

What about those who have been hurt by the church?

People have come to the church for various reasons and left for various reasons. Whatever the circumstances, they did not find what they were looking for in the church. So how do we evangelize to those hurt in the church?

Rule#1 – Don't push them or try to force them into the church building. Take the church to them...

- Build personal relationship

- Build trust
- Let your life speak the testimony to them
- Encourage them to take another look because the church is learning and is changing

Rule #2 – If they are your friends, you don't want them to lose their hope of eternal life, so don't be afraid of rejection. It is far better for you to have invested love in them and fail to restore them to the church than to have not tried.

Rule #3 – People coming to Christ is not on your timeline, don't be discouraged if it does happen when you expect. God has promised his Word will not return to him void. You may receive rejection and two years later have them in the pew beside you. Patience – you are only told to push on the rock, you don't have to move it. It is about obedience to Gods word.

Consider the following analogies:

- Building trust is like plowing the soil
- Creating that curiosity we talked about is like planting seeds
- Openness is like the seed sprouting
- The flower is like a fruitful Christian

So consider that a man is out plowing the soil and sowing seed and some falls on hard ground, some on rocky ground and some on fertile ground... See where I am going with this?

Salmo is a rose garden...

Now I want to address openness to Change and how to foster this in those to whom you are evangelizing...

This is more difficult that what we talked about earlier when we addressed developing curiosity in an individual.

Why?

It requires a person to look inside them selves with a moral lens and examine who they are...

Perhaps they must look at:

- An addiction to pornography
- An addiction to alcohol
- An addiction to drugs
- Being unfaithful to their spouse
- How their drinking has created abuse situations in the home
- Why they are angry with their spouse

- Why they are angry with their parents
- Why they are stealing from their boss
- And the list goes on and on...

In short, Change requires an examination of self-as-is before any to-be can be established, because you have to know who you are, before you can start changes for who you can become.

It is so difficult because people are afraid to look inside... ever wonder why people resist sitting alone and praying?

Many times people don't want to be alone in their thoughts, or perhaps they don't want to really connect with God because he knows where they are at, just like Adam in the garden, so they hide themselves from God and go through the motions.

Why do you think so many people have such self-loathing?

Why do you think so many people commit suicide?

Why do you think so many people turn to drugs and alcohol in the first place?

Why do you think people get super busy and distract themselves with overloaded careers or activities?

Becoming open to change is tough, but being willing to recognize that things are not right, that inside of themselves is a need that requires filling, seeing that emptiness within will open the doors of their heart to a new purpose in life, a purpose in Christ Jesus and his church, they can be redeemed from their life, they can be healed. The emptiness will go away.

Whether an unsaved person admits it or not, man whether some Christians admit it or not, we all have areas of our lives that need sanctification.

Coaching a person on the journey of looking inside is a daunting task. Not everyone is willing to go down this road, in fact, it is here that many will reject the cross and salvation. It is because they are afraid of rejection by God or they are afraid to confront the sin within themselves. Unfortunately, some Christians become stalled here as well as they refuse to confront those areas of their lives that God wants changed. Some Christians stop growing as a result.

In years past we have all preached about the destination, you know... heaven or hell and this is a very present reality for the unsaved, yet stalled Christians need to understand that they are saved; yes! But now it is all about the journey.

When our friends do look inside... just be there! Be patient as they work through this difficult stage. Pray for them, be friends with them, love on them.

How many people here know about gold purification?

Gold is refined in the fire... it is purified over a period of time. As the impurities rise to the surface they are skimmed off leaving just pure Gold. Well consider Gods precious Holy Spirit as the refining fire. It gets inside of a person a burns of all the flesh leaving behind a Christ like person.

What do you think it looks like in a person when the refining fire is burning? Where does all that dross go? Sometimes it comes out of their mouths. I have heard some of the foulest most hurtful things come from Christians as God turned up the fire...

What am I saying? Be Patient and understanding with each other and with those to who you are sharing the good news of Jesus.

I stand up here all the time and I witness to people as often as possible, what goes through my head...

I just want to yell: "This is true, Jesus is real, his presence makes all the difference in life, you can actually really be happy in Jesus if you would just surrender! Just believe!" "God why can't they just let go?"

We all need more Jesus...

So what did Jesus do?

With a gentle affirmation, Jesus reaches out and touches the peoples pain

Consider his talk with the Samaritan woman at the well. The Jewish people considered the Samaritans as dogs and women less than that and yet here is Jesus talking with her. The woman opens up her brokenness to Jesus, and Jesus affirms her several times by saying: "you are right..." then he gently applies some honesty.

When we find broken people; and we have but to look around or open the door and look outside; we can help people confront their personal failures and sin by actively listening to what they are saying. We cannot be judgmental or be condemning; we must be compassionate.

Here is the big one in this area so don't miss this point...

The enemy has probably bashed you around and taken you on some hard journeys in this life. I can say with surety that everyone here has made mistakes, me included. The enemy wants us to be ashamed and embarrassed and hide within ourselves. Now romans 8:28 says all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes. This means that your greatest failures, your worst mistakes, your troubles, your doubts, your struggles, can be the most effective tool in winning souls for Christ, but you need to push down your fear, lower your shields and be real and relational with those around you.

In Colossians 1:24-2:5 HCSB Paul says:

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for His body, that is, the church. I have become its servant, according to God’s administration that was given to me for you, to make God’s message fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints. God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery — Christ. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.”

People it is through our suffering that we can relate and have compassion for others suffering. Our going through the trials and troubles of this life has given us the tools to help others through the tough times. The enemy wants to convince people that they are alone in their secret sin. He tries to isolate us. This is one reason why fellowship is so important.

Friends when we are open with others who need that honesty we create trust. Speaking honestly about our own lives, struggles and questions and listening with a compassionate heart goes a long way... then speaking about how God helped us through those times is the powerful message that will lead to a person accepting Christ as their personal savior. We relate our struggles and how God has helped us through them.

If today, you are saying God never helped me in my troubled times, you need to take another look...

So how did Jesus deal with self-pity and fearful people?

Consider the paralytic man next to the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem.

In John 5:5-8 CEV we read:

“Beside the pool was a man who had been sick for thirty- eight years. When Jesus saw the man and realized that he had been crippled for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to be healed?” The man answered, “Lord, I don't have anyone to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up. I try to get in, but someone else always gets there first.” Jesus told him, “Pick up your mat and walk!” Right then the man was healed”

So Jesus first asked the question: "Do you want to be healed?" because some people don't... Then he got the self-pitying and fearful person moving with a strong command, not by feeding the insecurity. Jesus said: "Pick up your mat and walk!"

How often those who open themselves up to us are full of trepidation and fear:

- What will my friends think of me?
- What if I'm wrong about this?
- What if I make a mistake

Solution – Spur them on to action, stir them up to good works, encourage them, exhort them, and edify them. Place them into a culture of honor in which you show your expectation of them and your confidence in their ability to succeed. We can relate a similar story of how God has helped us to overcome.... And we can go home and pray for God to help our friend. My favorite technique, I really shouldn't say here but I will, is to invite people to come along and see what Christianity looks like in action. One such event is the Community luncheon here in Salmo, where we can go and listen and build relationships. How about when we painted the johns at the park?

Now if you will consider with me how Jesus dealt with apathy, complacency and disinterested glib attitudes. Need an example? Let's look at Nicodemus...

This man Nicodemus came to meet Jesus at night...

John 3:1-21 HCSB

"There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Him at night and said, " Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him."

Jesus replied, " I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"But how can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

Jesus answered, "I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus.

"Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?" Jesus replied. "I assure you: We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, but you do not accept

Our testimony. If I have told you about things that happen on earth and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about things of heaven? No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven — the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.

“This, then, is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

So Nicodemus came to Jesus under the cover of night. Jesus spoke to him about being born again. Nicodemus the Pharisee asks: “How can a man be born again when he is old” ...“Can a man re-enter his mother's womb and be born again?” Jesus firmly corrects him by saying: “You are Israel's teacher and you don't understand these things?” Jesus dealt with the glib, apathetic attitude directly and firmly, then he explained to him what it means to be born again. As Christians we can be firm especially in our convictions, we can confront apathy, glibness and sarcasm strongly.

The apostles always encouraged the followers of Jesus to speak boldly. (Greek: *Parresiazomai*)

1 Thessalonians. 2:2 HCSB

On the contrary, after we had previously suffered, and we were treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by our God to speak the gospel of God to you in spite of great opposition.

Emboldened here means:

parrhēsiazomai; to be frank in utterance, or confident in spirit and demeanor to use freedom in speaking, be free spoken to speak freely to grow confident, have boldness, show assurance, assume a bold bearing

2 Corinthians 3:12 HCSB

Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness.

parrēsia; from 3956 and a derivative of 4483; all out- spokenness, i. e. frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication, assurance
freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech openly, frankly, i. e without concealment without ambiguity or circumlocution without the use of figures and comparisons free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity

So my point is Christian is not synonymous with “Milk Sop”

Be Bold, Be Strong, Be Saved

And Be Willing to share the good news of Jesus

Prayer