

Prayer, Care, Share - Part 3

The Role of Sharing in Evangelism

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Why was Christ crucified? Christ was crucified to reconcile us to God, so that we would not die in our sins and spend an eternity in hell, separated from God forever . . .

Christ was not crucified so that we could have the life we always dreamed of. It was not so our life would be pain free. It was not to secure our financial success or to improve your physical health. It was not so we could be nicer people or have better manners. It was not so we could be happy and blessed. It was not so we could be successful or even respected. It was not so we could feel less guilty or be more religious. It was not so we could have good self-esteem or see ourselves as significant. Jesus was crucified because our sin and rebellion has separated us from a holy God and justice demands death and separation. We each have been found guilty, and the judgment of death and eternal condemnation have been passed upon us all. If we die in our sin, we will be shut out from the presence of the Lord and spend forever in hell, a place of everlasting destruction and suffering. (Matthew 10:28; Matthew 13:42; Matthew 18:8; Philippians 1:28; Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

Jesus Christ came to reconcile mankind to God. Luke 19:10 tells us, *“The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”* He, the Son of God, became a man and lived a sinless life so that he could die in our place and pay the price for our sin. So that all who receive him, who believe in his name, will become children of God (John 1:12) and spend eternity in heaven.

Romans 3:10-12 – *“As it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’”*

Romans 3:23 – *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

Romans 5:8 – *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Romans 6:23 – *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Romans 8:1 – *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

Jesus came to save us from our sins, but the results of our being saved are marvelous. Through the blood of Jesus and the gift of grace that we have received . . . our sins are forgiven. Unconditional love is experienced. Hearts are healed. Needs are met. Temptation is defeated. Freedom is found. Forgiving others is now possible. Relationships are reconciled. Priorities are changed. Conscience is clear. Peace is granted. Purpose is discovered. Selflessness becomes the norm . . . Being made right with God through Jesus Christ is the key . . . but to be made right with God one must first repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Not just an acknowledgement that Jesus exists, because the book of James tells us that the even the demons believe, yet they have been eternally condemned. Those who repent and believe are eternally saved and will have new affections and desires for God. It is a repentance, a turning away from the world and towards Christ. It is finally coming to a point in our lives that we put our complete trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from our sin so that we could be reconciled to God. That is why, if we are going to impact the world for the kingdom of God, it must be focused on the preaching of the gospel. Only the gospel possesses the power to transform lives. When we watch the news we are overcome by the evil all around us, but the biggest problem is the evil within us. We desperately need a Savior. Salvation is not found in starting another NGO, or in a government, or in the U.N. or in more education. Salvation is found in Jesus Christ . . . and his method of bringing the good news to our hurting world is through us . . . the church. Only we are called to be the light of the world. Our world, our country, our city desperately need us to take up this challenge and preach the gospel.

Romans 10:13-14 says this, *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”*

We must share the hope found in Jesus Christ and we find our instructions of how to do this in God’s Word.

In 1 Peter 3:14-15 the apostle Peter gives us these words:

“¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

At the time that these verses were written, the Christians of the first century were experiencing much persecution. It was a dangerous time to be a Christian. Peter is calling them to courage, but then explains how it is possible in the face of adversity. In verse 15 we find a very interesting phrase,

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.” This phrase is given as the exact opposite to fearing men. If you want to be freed from the fear of man, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.”

Proverbs 4:23 tells us that our hearts are the “well-spring” of life. Throughout scripture we see the importance of the heart.

Psalm 51:10 – *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”*

Matthew 5:8 – *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

Hebrews 10:22 – *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”*

Matthew 22:37 – *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

Jeremiah 29:13 – *“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”*

Whatever we treasure most in our hearts is what we fear and value above all else. Peter is telling us, in our hearts, to set Christ high above all others as holy and sacred. As our first love. King of kings, Lord of lords, Son of God, Emmanuel God with us, Creator of all things, Savior of the World, Blessed and Anointed One. We are to love and fear Jesus Christ above all others.

When this occurs our relationship to God in Christ becomes our greatest treasure. This is a very secure position to live out of. A man whose heart is set on earthly things, such as possessions, prestige, pleasure or comfort is most vulnerable, because any of these could be taken from him in a moment. But he who trusts in God stands secure because nothing can separate him from the love of God: *“Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*(Romans 8:38-39)

You see this type of “Honoring Christ the Lord as holy” in Acts 5.

In the early days, after Jesus had ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit had come at Pentecost, the apostles of Jesus were the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem. At one point they were arrested and put in prison. They were miraculously released and kept preaching, although the religious leaders of their day were furious with them. At one point they were brought in before the main council and the high priest. The following verses tell the story.

²⁷And when they (the guards) had brought them (the apostles), they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel (sent the apostles out and quieted the council) . . . and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and

let them go.⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

This is a living example of “honoring Christ the Lord as holy”, set apart and more precious than anything in this world. “It has been that if we fear God we fear no other, but if we do not fear God we fear all others.” The apostles had made Christ holy in their hearts and because of this they no longer feared man.

1 Peter 3:15 then continues with these words, ***“Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”***

Other translations say, *“always be prepared to give an answer”*. The word answer is originally “apologia”, similar to the English word apologetics.

During the final week of his life, Jesus warned his disciples, in Luke 21:12, that unbelievers would persecute them and hand them over to prison and bring them before kings and governors. Then he says, *“This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate beforehand how to make your case. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict”* (Luke 21:14).

In one verse Peter says, *“Always be ready to make a case for your hope.”* In another Jesus says, *“Don't meditate beforehand how to make your case.”* So how do we reconcile these two statements?

These instructions call us not to memorizing a presentation, but more to an ongoing relationship with Christ and familiarity of the gospel that flows easily from our tongues as the Holy Spirit leads.

As we think back to the precious phrase, “Honoring Christ as holy” is not only the solution for your fear, it is also the reason for your hopefulness. In the face of death and persecution, what is the source of your hope? Jesus Christ. Then tell who He is, what He has done, and why he is worthy of your trust and hope. Proclaim the beauty of the gospel.

If our hearts do not know the hope of Christ, then we will merely witness out of a sense of duty to defend doctrine, instead of truly speaking of a firsthand account of the hopefulness found in Christ.

Return to the Word, to Prayer, to authentic Christian community and to the hope of Jesus Christ. Then Christ will be holy in your heart and you will know a hope for which you can naturally give a reason.

Salvation is prompted by God drawing people to Himself, but there will often be a role that we have to play. We need to be able to explain the gospel and give an answer for the hope that we have, but we must understand what is our role and what is God's.

A key passage to take note of, as we seek to share the gospel, is 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. Here the Apostle Paul reminds us how the gospel of Jesus Christ will be foolishness to the natural man. This was done intentionally, so that as people believe in Jesus Christ it will clearly be a work of God.

“¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:

*“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”*

The phrase “lofty speech or wisdom”, in today’s vernacular, might sound something like this: “I didn’t come to you with a vocabulary of a seminary professor, a speaking formula from TED talks, a flashy PowerPoint presentation, and a sermon that somehow manipulated you into agreeing to our beliefs, praying a prayer, signing a card, raising your hand, joining our religious movement or even joining our church. I did not even come to convince you of the logic of Christianity. I came with merely a simple presentation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No debate. No arguing. No twisting arms. Just the simple truth of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the repentance and belief that reconciles one to God.

Paul preached trusting only the simple truth of the gospel and the power of God. So that the only way they could explain their conversion would be by giving God full credit.

To “share” the good news of Jesus Christ is to set before them the simple facts of the Gospel:

- That all mankind has been separated from a holy, righteous and loving God because of our sin. That the wages of sin is death and because of our sin we deserve condemnation and eternal separation from God in a place of endless torment, called hell.
- God, seeing our desperate need, sent His Son down from heaven to earth to become a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a sinless life, and willingly laid down His life for our sake and was crucified on a Roman cross. In this act He sought to pay for our sins, so that we could be reconciled to God. Three days later he was raised from the dead, conquering sin and death. All who will repent and believe in Jesus Christ will be forgiven and reconciled to God.

As we share the gospel we must follow the examples of Jesus and Paul. **Some unbelievers will need to hear about repentance, others about belief, and others both repentance and belief.** We see Jesus and Paul, both, sharing the gospel in various ways, based on how the Holy Spirit led them in differing situations. With the proud and self-righteous the emphasis was on repentance. For those who were already repentant, both Jesus and Paul preached belief and grace through faith.

- In Luke 10:25 we see that a self-righteous lawyer stood up and tempted Jesus. So Jesus gave him law.
- Similarly, in Luke 18, verse 18, the rich, young ruler came to Jesus. He wanted to know how to get everlasting life. Most of us would have been overjoyed, but Jesus knew the heart of this man. He saw the pride, self-righteousness and love for money. Jesus gave him the law to reveal the idolatry in his heart.
- Then we see grace being given to the humble in the case of Nicodemus (John 3). He was already familiar with the law and had a humble heart. So Jesus called him to belief without mentioning repentance.
- It is the same for the Philippian jailor in Acts 16, who asked, “What must I do to be saved?” He already possessed a heart of repentance and belief, he just needed instructions of how to put his trust in Jesus Christ.

Another frequent question emerges as we consider sharing our faith is, **“How can we know who to share with?”**

God has given us spiritual markers that help us know better who to share with. The first step is to give special consideration to **those who show interest in the things of God**. Romans 3:10-12 tells us that *“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”* Because of this, if we see someone who is interested in the things of God, it must be God working in their lives. The human heart will have no interest in God unless God begins to draw them to Himself (John 6:44). Once we see God working in someone’s life, we need to join God in that work. That’s what Jesus did. In John 5:19 Jesus said, *“I only do what I see the Father doing.”* If we see God moving in someone’s life, that is our invitation to join God and help this person find Jesus Christ.

A second spiritual marker that will help us discern who to reach out to is that of **our own spiritual burden**. This may be a certain unbeliever who is often on your mind or in your prayers. Someone for whom God has given you a compassionate and even a broken heart. Someone who you feel a growing responsibility for in regards to their salvation. At times the people that we are burdened for most are family members, coworkers or certain friends. With that in mind, let the guiding of the Spirit help you focus your energy and your prayers as you seek to be used of God to share your faith in a meaningful way with others. It could be at this point that this person is very closed to spiritual things. It doesn’t mean you stop sharing the love of Christ with them. If God has given you a burden for them, but they don’t seem interested yet, invest in them anyway. At times God guides us to specific individuals through their spiritual openness, at other times through a burden for them that God has put on our hearts. At other times God uses both of these spiritual markers to guide us.

In these previous pages we have discussed the following topics. Please take a moment to review these ideas and respond as God leads.

- 1) Why was Christ crucified?

- 2) In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.
- 3) Always being prepared to make a defense . . . for a reason for the hope that is in you.
- 4) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
- 5) Know the essentials of the Gospel.
- 6) Wisely preach repentance and/or belief.
- 7) Look for spiritual interest and spiritual burden.

So why was Christ crucified? Christ was crucified to reconcile us to God, so that we would not die in our sins and spend an eternity in hell, separated from God forever . . . Repent and believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.