

The Church in Action: Evangelism

The early church, as seen in the Book of Acts, was an active church. They were committed to evangelism, missions, discipleship, fellowship, worship, prayer, and ministry (Acts 1:8; 2:42-47). A careful study of the evangelical church in America will quickly reveal that the modern-day church is not as active as the early church in the practice of such spiritual disciplines. One area the American church struggles with is the practice of personal evangelism. Today, we will learn three steps to effective evangelism from the early church.

Step one is prayer. The early church regularly met together for the single purpose of praying. Luke writes of the early church, “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14). Changing someone’s heart is God’s business. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). Because God is the One who changes a person’s heart, we must invest much time into prayer. The late E.M. Bounds, author of *Power through Prayer* agrees, “Talking to men for God is a great thing but talking to God for men is greater still.” The following are a few verses that we should regularly pray over those we relate to who are far from Jesus.

Verses on Praying for Lost People:

John 6:44 - Pray for God to draw the lost person to Himself.

Acts 17:27 - Pray for the lost person to seek to know God (Ill. Cornelius in Acts 10).

2 Cor. 4:4 - Pray for Satan to be bound from blinding the lost person for the truth.

2 Cor. 10:3-4 - Pray for any stronghold in the lost person’s life to be demolished.

John 16:8-11 - Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the life of the lost person.

Step two is preparation. The early church was prepared to share the gospel whenever given the opportunity. It is obvious from a study of the activity of the disciples that they knew the Scriptures, and it is Scripture that God uses in the faith building process (Rom. 10:17). Notice in the following verses that Peter points his audience who does not know Christ to the Scriptures, “At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, ‘Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus’” (Acts 1:15-16). And then Peter continues later in the same passage, “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ...” (Acts 1:20). Did you see it? Peter takes them to Scripture and

then he says, “For it is written” We must immerse ourselves in God’s Word daily if we are to be effective in sharing Christ with others.

Step three is proclamation. Praying and preparing are vital. However, there must come a time in which we open our mouths and speak the truth in love, or the gospel will not be shared. We are God’s plan for reaching the world! Surely God could have reached lost people in several different ways, but He chose to use people to reach people. You and I are His plan! Therefore, we must live our lives on mission and share the gospel with others as often as possible. This is what the early church did. Consider Peter’s message, “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:22-24). Peter continues, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ— this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). Wow! Peter shares the glorious gospel of the Jesus with a crowd of people who did not know the Lord and as a result God changes the hearts of many. Luke writes, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Why is this so significant? One, just a few weeks prior to this event Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:31-35, 69-75) and now he is fearlessly sharing the gospel out in the open. Please do not forget that Peter was not trained in the modern rabbinical schools of his day (Acts 4:13). Peter was just an ordinary everyday believer in the Lord Jesus just like you and me. He prayed, he prepared, and he proclaimed the only message that has the power to change one’s eternal destiny. Dr. William Wilson, professor of evangelism at Luther Rice Seminary, says, “In the Bible the Gospel of Jesus Christ is described as the most important thing in all the world. And we were made for evangelism.” Yes, we were made to share the gospel.

My prayer is that God will use us all the more, as we see the Day of His return approaching, to reach those without Christ with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus!

Thanks for joining us today, and remember, God loves you and so do we!