



Evangelism – Sunday School

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Section 4

The Practice of Evangelism

OK, after the last several weeks we are now (I hope) a little bit better prepared for evangelism. Today we are going to turn our attention to discussing what methods we are to use to carry out evangelism.

In this section we are going to look at five methods that I believe are biblically legitimate for the church to use in evangelism. As we go through each of these, you will find there is a measure of overlap between some of them.

And please remember, such things as are covered here are a part of experimental theology, and thus while these principles must guide our thinking and actions with respect to our methodology of evangelism, the details of how we work all this out will differ for each church and each personal situation.

I. Evangelism from the pulpit.

For obvious reasons I am not going to cover this method here.

However, I will make one comment with respect to this point. While some claim that pulpit preaching is the “chief” means through which the church is to conduct evangelism,¹ I find no biblical evidence that suggests such a view is true. Instead, realizing that most people will never come to a church on their own, and are even reluctant to come to church if you invite them as a friend, it is important that Christians, like the early church depicted in Scripture, not rely exclusively on the pulpit but use other approaches of evangelism to reach the vast majority of the lost.

II. Evangelism in public settings outside the church.

Even a quick survey of Acts should convince us that a real part of the numerical growth of the church was the result of the proclamation of the word done **outside** the regular gathering of the church or any sort of “pulpit ministry.” In some cases it was among Jews gathered in some area, as when Paul went to Philippi and preached to a group of Jewish women praying outside the city gate by the riverside (Acts 16:11-13). At other times it was in a public area among Gentiles, like when Paul spoke to the

¹ One example is Steven Lawson, “4 Ways Pastors Must Practice Evangelism,” from <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/4-ways-pastors-must-practice-evangelism/>

Athenians in the midst of the Aeropagus (Acts 17:22). The point is not the place in which this type of evangelism is carried out, but rather that we both formally plan and organize such evangelistic activities as well as take advantage of spontaneous opportunities when they unexpectedly arise.

Be creative. I read of a church that sends mature, well-equipped people out on Sunday afternoons. They go to various places in the city and set up a table and offer a cup of soda or some other refreshment to passers-by. They ask those who stop by the table to voluntarily take a quiz on the gospel. Through this, those who take the quiz are surprised by their score and usually are willing to talk about what they got right and wrong. This leads to an opportunity to talk about the gospel with them.

III. House to house evangelism.

House to house evangelism is referring to an organized strategy by which we seek to reach everyone in our area with the gospel. In Acts 5:41-42 we read that the apostles used this method, and in Acts 20:20-21 we see that Paul did. Certainly I would not argue that “house-to-house” evangelism is a sacred method in itself and that all churches must literally visit every single house in their area, but I would argue that it does involve at least two general principles that every church should responsibly apply to its evangelistic ministry.

- Every church ought to have a systematic plan for attempting to reach as many people as they can in their area with the gospel.
- In that plan we should aim to pursue reaching people in private situations where they can ask questions and we can speak to them more directly.

Benefits of Teamwork

If we connect this with Jesus’ method of sending His disciples out 2-by-2, as found in the Gospels (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1), I think we gain insight in how to wisely carry out this approach to evangelism. Any strategy for “house to house” evangelism should include having people go out in teams.

There is much benefit to be gained by this.

- There is more knowledge and experience to draw from while talking with others.
- There are more gifts to engage in the service of those we are sharing with.
- There is confirmation of the matter preached when there are two or more witnesses (Deut 17:6).
- There is mutual benefit...
 - Encouragement before and after to continue on, strengthening our resolve and weakening our fear
 - Prayer of one while the other is talking
 - Accountability so that neither is ever open to false charges or subjected to temptation alone
 - Safety for both persons so they are stronger in ministry (Ecc 4:9-12)
 - Learn from one another so that we grow in faith
 - Share together in the joys and sorrows
 - Deepening of bond through shared experience

All this would indicate that teamwork is a very wise way to do this type of evangelism.

Training

How much training is necessary before a person can be sent out to do this?

Please remember that Jesus' disciples were still unclear about who He is or what was His mission when He first sent them out. Furthermore, they were far from "mature." And yet, Jesus had them go out and do what they could. This is not to excuse a church from providing training for those who go out to evangelize, or from using wisdom like teaming up a younger Christian with a more mature Christian, but is only to note that church leadership must not wrongly wait until members reach a certain level of knowledge or maturity before having them get involved in this kind of evangelism.

On the other hand, as we see in Mark 6:7-13, Jesus did provide them with instruction before they went out. In particular, Jesus prepared them both theologically, ministerially and practically.

- Theological preparations –

Jesus told them to preach repentance. This was preparatory work for the good news of forgiveness in Him that would follow. Pastors should instruct the congregation about what things to emphasize when evangelizing, and may want to tell some of the people only to share what they presently understand while avoiding getting into discussions they are not prepared for. The point is that the church leaders must make intelligent decisions in the theological preparation of their people for evangelism.

- Ministerial preparations –

- Jesus told them to drive out demons. This would vividly demonstrate the love and power of God in delivering them from the bondage of the devil, and it would confirm that their message had authority, and hence that those who heard it should believe. Church leaders should make sure to prepare the people to look for ways in which they can practically serve the people they are sharing with, and to explain by what authority they speak the things they are sharing and do the things they are doing, namely, that they are servants of the living God and are ultimately not serving themselves or some organization.
- Jesus told them how to respond to people's different responses to them. Pastors should likewise help their people be prepared for the many different kinds of responses they might face when evangelizing the lost. By the way, this would indicate that we are not to wait until it is acceptable before we seek to evangelize the lost. There is always the danger of a harsh response from those we share the gospel with. Opposition is just an unavoidable part of our commission to evangelize in a world that hates Christ and His gospel.

- Practical preparations –

In this case Jesus told them to take little. This would make traveling easier. Pastors should likewise instruct their people about how to make wise practical preparations according to the particular situations they will be entering.

Sending

And then, Jesus sends them out. Jesus did not just tell them that, now having been trained, they should go out to share whenever they felt moved. He intentionally sent them out to evangelize. This is what the church must do as well. It does little good to equip the people and then not take steps to organize and send them out.

In sum, I would assert that every church (1) should have a strategy for reaching their area with the gospel, (2) should prepare its members for doing evangelism, and (3) should send members out in teams to bring the gospel to unbelievers in private situations.

IV. Friendship evangelism.

Of all the methods of evangelism, I will spend the most time on this section.

One of the most natural ways for conducting evangelism is through “friendship” evangelism. In fact, field surveys indicate that about 90 percent of new converts first become interested in Christianity not through social media or going to church, but through some sort of interpersonal acquaintance.² Yale historian Kenneth S. Latourette wrote, “the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession...but men and women who carried on their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those they met in this natural fashion.”³

What exactly is friendship evangelism? We find the answer to this question in the ministry of Christ. In Luke 5:29-32 we read that Jesus went to Levi’s home (Levi was a new disciple) and ate with a “large company of tax collectors” and “sinners.” Because of such things, Jesus was accused of being “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (7:34). Jesus did not deny this to be true, mind you. He **was** a friend of sinners. But this friendship was not aimless or carnal. In Luke 5:32 we read that His purpose was to call them to repentance. In other words, we see that Jesus conducted friendship evangelism by engaging with the lost in situations that were biblically lawful (not at strip joints) and in which He spent time with them in **conversation** (not in a **monologue**) with the goal of persuading them to believe and be saved. For us, then, friendship evangelism involves making friends with non-Christians for the purpose of seeking to win them to Christ.

Perhaps it would be helpful to break the term “friendship evangelism” up this way.

- **“Friendship” evangelism requires that we treat them as friends treat friends, seeking to love them in word and deed.** There must be a friendship in order for there to be friendship evangelism. We must have a personal relationship with the person where there is a bond of genuine concern for each other’s wellbeing. We must make an investment of time through which there is a sharing of one another in and through some kind of activity. And there must be a value placed upon the relationship where both see it as important and pleasing.

Of course, we must understand that there are different degrees of friendships and different purposes for friendships. Our friendships with the lost cannot be as deep and spiritually profitable as with believers, for while we share a common humanity, we are not serving the same God. And while we can be friends with the lost for purposes temporal in nature, we cannot be friends with them on issues that are eternal in nature. And, remembering that the temporal and the eternal cannot be totally separated, even those areas where we share a temporal bond will **not** be strong due to our devotion to different gods and ultimate aims.

- **Friendship “evangelism” requires the proclamation of the gospel, otherwise it is not “evangelism.”** We must not forget that friendship alone will not save a person. They must hear the gospel. Friendship is simply a tool or bridge through which we develop open doors to share Christ. We may have different levels of friendship with the lost and different

² Interestingly, even Atheists have websites teaching other Atheists how to persuade Christians to become Atheists through friendship. For example, see <http://www.wikihow.com/Persuade-a-Christian-to-Become-Atheist>

³ Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 1:230.

purposes in each friendship, but no concern should have a higher priority than seeing them won to Christ. That is to say, evangelism should **never** have second place in this matter. Since we are Christians, Christ is central to our lives and the gospel should naturally flow out in word and deed. This, of course, may in many cases cause the friendship to end, but there is no way around that.

So, friendship evangelism involves both friendship and evangelism. Without either of those two pieces it is no longer friendship evangelism.

Below I would like us to look at two important matters related to friendship evangelism. The first has to do with how to carry out friendship evangelism, and the second with arguments against friendship evangelism.

A. Some suggestions for how to conduct friendship evangelism

It is without doubt that some Christians carry out friendship evangelism in an inappropriate manner. For some, there is no intention of actually showing friendship but only of preaching the gospel. Non-believers are often incensed by this, and to a degree they are right, for feigned friendship is not honesty and hence is a sin both against God and man. But even for those who wish to cultivate a real friendship through which to share the gospel, there are many mistakes made that unnecessarily offend non-believers. If a non-believer is offended by the gospel or our commitment to Christ, that is one thing. But if they are offended by our poor behavior or lack of graciousness in our friendship with them, that is a whole other matter.

Below are some suggestions of conduct Christians should seek to learn and apply to all friendship evangelism situations (these should also be applied to every kind of evangelism situation). In all these matters you will need to pray for God to give wisdom so that you will be able to apply these principles effectively in each situation.

- **Genuinely care about them.** We must understand that friendship involves more than just being friendly. There must be a reciprocal relationship of care. Genuine care, biblically speaking, will compel us to tell them the truth about their lost estate and need for Christ. In fact, it will see this as what is best and most important for them. But genuine care will also compel us to do other things for their well-being. For example: We should lend them a hand when they have a need, encourage them when they are struggling with something at work, defend them when they are unjustly treated, and more. Good deeds should adorn our friendship evangelism.

Insincerity in friendship is nothing less than deception. Deception is not love, even if the goal is to win them to Christ. We must beware of the approach of the salesman who becomes your best friend in order to close a deal, but once the deal is over, whether you buy the product or not, his friendship is finished. Instead, we must be genuine in our friendship with them and truly care for them. Of course, we must remember all the caveats mentioned elsewhere in this course, but we should have real affections for them, and those should be evident in how we relate to them.

- **Cultivate two-way communication.** When sharing time with the lost, you should **not** do all the talking but should allow the conversation to naturally flow back and forth. This means you should not only express your ideas, **but should also listen carefully and try to understand what the other person is saying to you**, and then process it so that you can respond back in a way connected with what the person has said. We see Jesus doing

this in almost every conversation with an unbeliever recorded in Scripture. The reasons for doing this include the following.

- Through two-way communication you can build trust and respect by which you open the door for more talk about Christ.
 - Two-way communication enables you to better understand their thinking and thus better address what their real area of confusion or disagreement is. Christians often fail to answer the questions unbelievers are asking because they do not carefully listen to their questions.
- **Approach each person as an individual.** Do not handle each relationship as if they are all exactly alike and each person can be shared with in the exact same way. As Walker notes: “Some are stubborn, willful, and aggressive; others show quick and early interest. Some profess themselves to be ‘spiritual,’ while others say they have no thought or regard for anything but the stuff of this life.”⁴ Take time to understand each person individually so that you can speak to them in a personal manner. Jesus did not use the same approach to talk with the Samaritan woman that He did to talk with Nicodemus, and we should not do so either. While all sinners are equally fundamentally in need of salvation, we must also recognize that there are real differences among them, and that we must therefore approach them as individuals if we would wish to be more effective in our evangelism.
 - **Ask questions that set the stage for sharing the gospel.** Some scholars have gathered statistics of the number of questions Jesus asked during evangelistic conversations. What they have found is that “one of Jesus’ primary means of communication to unbelievers was asking good questions.”⁵ But Jesus did not ask questions just to promote idle conversation; He sought to use His questions as a means to direct the person towards the gospel.

ROLE PLAY Because of this, several churches in America train their people to ask useful questions that will help them identify how the person understands what has gone wrong in their life and what they think will fix it – that is, the person’s own version of the Fall and Redemption. After gaining clear understanding, the church member then shares the true story of their problem, starting from that person’s view of what is wrong with their life – linking it to their sinful condition before God, and then working to explain the only solution to their real problem – God’s forgiveness through Christ.

Other churches train their members to interact with people by trying to connect with them where they are at – and this beginning through questions. Therefore, if someone meets a person who presently shows no interest in the gospel, they might respond: “You know, I was like that several years ago, but now I believe in Christ. I would really be interested to know what your thoughts are and why you are not interested.”

Questions are a powerful way to connect with and understand others, from which the friendship is deepened and you can better enter into the phase of sharing the gospel.

- Related to the previous point, when asking questions about matters related to faith, **avoid only asking those questions which simply require a “yes” or “no” answer.** Include questions that will cause them to share about what they believe and why. Do not only ask,

⁴ Jeremy Walker, *The Brokenhearted Evangelist*, 102.

⁵ Barrs, Jerram (2009-05-06). *Learning Evangelism from Jesus* (p. 62). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

“Do you believe there is a God?” But follow this with asking why they answered this question the way they did. Or, if they say they believe in God without you having asked any question, ask them what they believe about the God they believe in. In other words, ask questions that will help you better understand the content of what they believe so that you can better present the gospel to them in a way more consistent with their present understanding and belief. This is similar to what Paul did when he walked around Athens observing their many idols, and then used his observations to speak with the people about the gospel (Acts 17:22-23).

- **Beware of using “Christian” language they will not understand.** As we have noted previously, there are many terms and expressions that are a part of our Christian culture but which will not be understood by non-Christians. Try to explain what you are saying in a way they can understand without using such terms. Of course, in the process you do not want to compromise or water down the content of the gospel in any way. And there will be some terms that simply cannot be avoided, like “Savior,” and so when we must use such words, we must make an effort to simply define them during our conversation (it would be wise to anticipate these and take some time beforehand to define these, perhaps seeking the help of a pastor).

Also, as mentioned before, there are also terms we use that are commonly used by non-Christians, but which carry a different meaning. **Can you think of a few?**

Freedom is such a term. Many of our contemporaries (at least in the West) think of freedom as deliverance from external control or constraint, such as from the government or any other authority interfering in their life in any way. They desire “freedom for myself, freedom to choose, freedom to do as I wish, freedom to make my life exactly what I want it to be.”⁶ In contrast, for all who trust in Christ, God promises freedom from the enslaving power of sin and from the dominion of the devil. But the goal of this freedom is that we would become servants of God, where we obey His will and do exactly what He wants. Without some kind of clarification at an appropriate time, the non-believer will have a very skewed understanding of what we are talking about when we say that those who trust in Christ are set free.

- **Start slow and build towards more.** Many pastors advise that we use something akin to the following approach when beginning a new relationship with a non-Christian.
 1. Let the person know you are a Christian (in a natural, unforced way)
 2. Ask him about his faith – and just listen!
 3. Listen to his problems – maybe offer to pray for him
 4. Share your problems with him – testify to how your faith helps you
 5. Share the gospel and your personal conversion story
 6. Answer objections and questions
 7. Give him a book to read
 8. Invite him to a church event
 9. Offer to read the Bible with him
 10. Take him to an “Explore the Bible” course hosted by your church

What is typically recommended is that we (generally) start with 1-4. If people are interested and want to talk more, we can move them to stages 5-7. If they are still interested, we can go on to stages 8-10. Sometimes it is appropriate to go straight to 8-10,

⁶ Jerram Barrs. *The Heart of Evangelism* (Kindle Locations 3579-3581). Crossway Books.

but often it is helpful to start further back in the process and give them time to think and discuss through things. We often think that only stages 8-10 count and invest all our energy there. However, many suggest that to get people to stages 8-10 we have to put the work in at 1-4. Sometimes we will have to keep jumping around between items 2-10 multiple times.

When we bring all things just listed together in our efforts at friendship evangelism, we are exercising love to our neighbor, which, as obedience to the second great commandment, glorifies God and blesses our neighbor (even if our neighbor rejects the blessing). Hopefully, under the blessing of God, it will also open the doorway for them to be more willing to hear the gospel.

We have explored 7 suggestions for how to conduct friendship evangelism. I realize that we will be stronger in some of these areas than in others. And some of us are more socially graceful than others. But in order to improve our evangelism, it is critical that we conscientiously work on each of these steps of wisdom, praying for help from the Holy Spirit to mature us in them.



1. Of the 7 suggestions above for conducting friendship evangelism, which is most helpful to you? Please explain why.

B. Some arguments against friendship evangelism

Based on what we have seen above, it might seem strange that there would be any arguments against friendship evangelism, and yet, there are several. Here I would like us to look at four common arguments I have heard raised against friendship evangelism, or at least against the kind of friendship evangelism I am advocating.

1. **Some argue that “making friends for the purpose of evangelism is just another form of manipulation.”**⁷ They advocate making friends with non-believers simply for the sake of friendship, and if sometime in your relationship the topic of the gospel comes up, then you can talk about it. “But,” they continue, “sharing the gospel should not be your primary goal of befriending them.” Another person speaks for many when he writes: “It seems insincere and, therefore, contrary to love of one’s neighbor to establish a relationship with an ulterior motive. If there were no intention to share the gospel with the ‘friend’ at some point, would the relationship even exist?”⁸ [How would you respond to such arguments?](#)

We have already made some comments about this above. This is a delicate issue that needs careful handling.

⁷ Heidelblog.net/2013/08/one-reason-why-unbelievers-don't-want-to-talk-to-us/

⁸ <http://www.puritanboard.com/showthread.php/46691-Friendship-Evangelism>

- On the one hand, some Christians admittedly can go overboard. They ask a lost person to come to their house, and then from the moment they sit down to the time they leave the Christian gives them no tea to drink and asks no questions about how they are doing, but from beginning to end does nothing but tell them they are a sinner in need of repentance. Zeal is certainly good but it must be governed by wisdom. We never see such obnoxious behavior in Jesus' example, and hence we should not do so either.
- On the other hand, making friends for the purpose of evangelism is exactly the thing that Jesus did (Luke 5:30-32). He talked with sinners and ate with them all for the purpose of sharing His gospel with them (Luke 19:10). If we are to imitate Him, we should have the same goal in mind.
- Furthermore, is the salvation of strangers really a nefarious motive for making friends? Such an assumption actually overlooks the fact that friendships are **always** born out of some kind of motivation. A student becomes a friend with a classmate because he would like someone to talk with or to do homework with. A doctor becomes a friend with another doctor because he wants to learn from his experience. Such is common in the beginning of friendships. So, if there are already all sorts of other motives to friendships, why may not Christians have the one motive that actually is, biblically speaking, more other-person-centered than any other motive? You could hardly be a Christian without wanting your non-Christian friends to know Jesus.

Therefore, while there are certainly some bad examples of those who have used the “friendship evangelism” method, that does not mean the method itself is wrong. On the contrary, it is undeniably one method Jesus used and so I believe it is a method that the church should employ as well.

2. **Some argue that friendship evangelism “flies in the face of the doctrine of total depravity” and hence is “unbiblical.”** They assert that since humans are closed to the gospel apart from regeneration, then there is “nothing any Christian can do to open the hearts of the lost to the gospel.” Thus they conclude that “Befriending the lost may make them more open to **you**, but it could never make them open to **Jesus**.”⁹ [How would you respond to this argument?](#)

This argument is an example of misapplying true theology to reach a wrong conclusion. Total depravity teaches that all humans are born morally corrupt in every faculty of their humanity, are enslaved to sin, and are at enmity with God. As a result, all are unable and unwilling to turn to Christ to be saved. However, the fact that humans are totally depraved and will not trust in Christ apart for the grace of God exerted upon them in regeneration, does not mean that God cannot use means like friendship in evangelism.

Instead, God can and often does work through means like friendship to cause people to be willing to listen to the gospel. Now, I would fully agree that the gospel alone saves. Friendships do not save. But, God uses various means to make people willing to listen.

- It may be a discussion on the evidence of creationism with an atheist,
- it may be helping out an enemy of the gospel who was in an accident where no one else was willing to help, or
- it may be befriending a person at work whom no one else likes,

⁹ <http://www.bereanbailey.org/?p=366>

... but whatever the case, God often works through such means to prepare hearts to be willing to listen to the gospel, and then through the proclamation of the gospel He saves them. So, we would not deny the reality of total depravity or the necessity of sharing the gospel, nor would we deny the priority of regeneration in the order of salvation. However, we would reject the argument that friendship evangelism denies the doctrine of total depravity.

3. **Some argue friendship evangelism is a direct violation of the warning in Proverbs 13:20 which reads: “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”** They reason from this verse that, since unbelievers are all fools, in that they do not fear God or love Him, then friendship with them will lead to our harm. [How would you respond to this argument?](#)

First, I would note that in Luke 5 Jesus did not immediately remove Levi from his old circle of friends. Instead, Jesus allowed Levi to invite his old friends to his home, and then Jesus sought through those relationships to persuade more lost people to repent and believe. Obviously, then, Jesus did not agree with the reasoning of those who argue in this way, at least not completely.

Second, the words “walk” and “companion,” in Proverbs 13:20, are speaking of friendship in the sense of walking with them in their way of life. It refers to adopting their worldview. Thus, if we imitate the wise and adopt their way of life as our own, we will be wise. But if we imitate the fools and adopt their way of life as our own, we will suffer harm. The point is that we should not to walk with the lost or those who do not fear and love God in such a way as to become like them.

This is why, with respect to Luke 5, Jesus did not meet with Levi’s old friends at a bar and hang out with them there! He did not want to be a “companion of fools” in that sense. Thus, I do believe we should exhort new believers to immediately remove themselves from old haunts or environments that are wicked and unlawful. But there is nothing unlawful about inviting over unbelievers to share in a meal. Of course, we must be careful here. It may be dangerous for a new believer to invite a friend over who is well versed in apologetics against the Christian faith! So, there will be exceptions to this rule. But in general, we should encourage new believers to reach out to unbelieving friends and relatives through friendship evangelism.

It is important that we note here that such friendships with the lost were not Jesus’ closest friendships. There were no unbelievers among those with Him during His upper room discourse (John 13-17) where He shared His heart to a fuller extent and shared with them in the intimate fellowship of the Lord’s Supper. Thus, Christians should never look at unbelievers as their closest friends!

There is one last argument against friendship evangelism that I would like to mention. It is actually not against friendship evangelism *per se*, but is against the kind of friendship evangelism that I am advocating in this course.

4. **Some argue that we are not to be confrontational in friendship evangelism but should share the gospel only with those who “want” to hear it.**¹⁰ If we share with those who do not want to hear it, then they will be insulted and not willing to be our friends anymore,

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leaving us with no more opportunity to be salt and light to them and attract them through our lives. [How would you respond to this argument?](#)

Concerning this matter it is important that we strive for balance. On the one hand we must remember the command to be gentle (2 Tim 2:24-26), even with those who oppose us. We should never be guilty of being offensive, pushy, or rude when sharing the gospel. To do so is to be the aroma of death rather than of life. On the other hand, according to Ephesians 6:18-19, we must be bold and not shrink back from testifying about Christ just because people do not want to hear.

In fact, many are the testimonies of those who did not want to hear the gospel when it was first presented to them, but who later trusted in Christ, and said it was through the sharing of the gospel by a Christian friend when they **did not** want to hear about it that God began to draw them. Believe me, many non-Christians with whom we begin to develop friendships are **not** going to want to hear. They will talk with us about many things but wish to stay away from the topic of “religion,” and when we try to talk with them about the gospel they will often try to change the subject, or will politely listen but not really want to listen. But then suddenly, for some, something changes – of course we know it is the Holy Spirit working in them – and they become interested and even believe. And interestingly, many are those who have expressed much interest in the gospel and asked to hear more who in the end walked away and never believed, like the rich young ruler.

Also, remember the testimony of the atheist we looked at previously. Even he knew it to be a failure to love if we hold back from preaching the gospel, including in a confrontational way.

So, please do not limit yourself to sharing the gospel only with those non-Christian friends who “want” to hear.

Of course, as mentioned above, please do be wise and considerate! If a person shows he does not want to hear anything more, then do not force it. Pray and look for another opportunity. But be prepared for the possibility that the time to end the friendship has come. At the same time, just because someone does not immediately trust in Christ does not mean we should dump them. While some will never believe, some take time. For many it is prolonged exposure to the Bible and Christians that draws them. Do not expect instantaneous results in every case.

[What is the way of wisdom here? Look at Proverbs 26:4-5. “⁴ Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.”](#) It is often difficult to determine how to best handle certain situations, and either way will look both right and wrong. So we need to seek the Spirit’s guidance to know when to pull out of a friendship and when to remain. There is often no clear right or wrong, and we need to refrain from making rash decisions in this area. In all cases we must seek to be responsible stewards with our time, but also to be patient as we share the gospel with the lost.

[Also, please do give other believers grace in these situations! Some will say three tries is enough and then you should move on. Others will say, “You see, I met with this person once a month for five years, and for the whole time he showed no interest, but then one day he believed. So, you are too hasty if you do not give the person at least several years of time.” We should be careful about judging one another in these matters, and should never use our experience as the rule by which to judge others. Nor should we bind others to practice](#)

evangelism in the same manner as we do in details not spelled out in Scripture.

In sum, friendship evangelism is a method modeled by Christ, and so I believe it is a method church should practice as we seek to fulfill our calling of being Christ's ambassadors in this world.

V. Literature Evangelism.

Do you ever pass out tracts to lost people? Why or why not?

Of those who do or have passed out tracts, what has been your experience?

This too is a method that has sparked controversy. Some assert that it is a helpful method while others contend that it is of little to no value. I do not want to discuss the controversy at length here, but will only share a few simple thoughts as to why I believe literature evangelism is legitimate and helpful.

First, I would contend that the means by which the Holy Spirit works unto regenerating a dead sinner is through the transmission of the Word. As 1 Peter 1:23 states, the Word is the seed that produces new life. And when contained in literature, it is not in any sense weakened. In fact, many people have been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through sound Christian literature.

Therefore, I would assert that passing out a tract or evangelistic booklet, if it contains the true gospel, can be used of God to save a person, or at least to plant or water gospel seed, and thus is a legitimate form of evangelism. Depending upon the circumstances, there are also many good books on virtually every topic with which a non-Christian might struggle. And of course, the best literature to give a non-Christian is a copy of the Bible itself. But if you have only a moment with a person and no time to say much of anything, a tract is a good means of passing on the gospel for them to read when it is convenient for them.

A question I have for those who persist in arguing otherwise is this: Is it really better to leave a person with no gospel account than to leave them with a tract that contains the gospel account or something of the gospel account? Is there something lost in leaving a person with a gospel tract? Then why would one argue against the use of tracts?

Second, when possible, I would recommend that this not be the **only** method used. I believe the Lord has made us relational beings, and especially blesses the personal dimension of evangelism. This is why our personal conversion story is often so powerful in evangelism. Thus, when passing out tracts, I would urge you to be prayerfully ready to talk with anyone who is willing, or, if unable to talk then, to set up a time to begin building a friendship in which you can further share the gospel.

Third, I would strongly encourage you to use literature as a supplement to the other methods mentioned above. Have a small packet of literature ready to pass out to every person who comes to church for the first time. Have a tract or evangelistic booklet to pass out to non-Christians you plan to share with through visitation or hospitality. In other words, make literature a primary means of furthering the work of evangelism through your church.

In sum, I believe using tracts for evangelism is a very useful method, never to replace the personal verbal proclamation of the gospel to the lost, but to be used at least as a supplement to such proclamation, and in those cases where we do not have time to talk, it should be viewed as a legitimate and good method for getting the gospel into the hands of one who might otherwise not have opportunity to hear. Thus, I strongly encourage all churches to make use of tracts.

George Street

We must beware of at least two common mistakes with tracts.

- First, a tract that speaks to a non-believer as if he is a believer is not helpful. Tract evangelism is seriously hindered when we use tracts that impress Christians for their theological acumen but which are indecipherable to the non-Christian. We must do the same with our tracts as with our verbal evangelism – cut out much of the unnecessary Christian jargon and write in plain language.
- Second, a tract that speaks of oneself to the degree that Christ is eclipsed or not given first place is not helpful. The goal of a tract is to present Christ and not myself to the lost.

In this fourth section of our course we have considered several methods by which to practice evangelism. We have looked at ...

- evangelism from the pulpit,
- evangelism in public settings outside the church,
- house to house evangelism,
- friendship evangelism, and
- literature evangelism.

Please remember: All preparations are wasted and all our prayers are hollow if we do not actually go out and evangelize. To prepare for something and then never go do it, to ask for something and then never strive to accomplish it, makes all our preparations and prayers mere emptiness. So please, let us make evangelism more than something we talk and pray about. Let us determine, with the help of God, to view it as one of the essential elements of why we exist as a church and actually get out and practice it.

Lord willing, in the next section we will examine obstacles to evangelism.



2. What is one key point you learned in the lesson today that is related to literature evangelism? Please take 2-3 minutes to write your answer below.

What are your answers to this question?

Ok, let's break into our groups

If time: Talk about ...

- opportunities from this past week, struggles, joys, and
- opportunities for this coming week.

Pray together.