

NURTURING A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM

Church Leaders... God Will Use YOU to INFLUENCE Others

Let's consider the **Challenges/Realities of the Pastorate (or Christian leadership)** as it relates to Evangelism.

The truth is, MANY pastors/church leaders feel 'guilty' about their personal evangelism. Several inherent struggles associated with pastoring/leading include:

- The 'Distractions' of day to day 'operations' related to ministry (administrative duties, expectations of others, etc.).
 - Often these leave us 'too busy' or feeling overwhelmed... (we can't even think about, let alone... take on one more thing!!)
- We are **Easily Isolated** from close interaction with non-Christians; relegated to our 'island of insiders'. This lends to Feeling your own witness is "lacking".
- We **Don't Want to Offend others**... we like to be liked too, and have...
 - Mortgages to pay down, bills to pay... don't want to drive people away!
- Or "evangelism" simply Isn't Our Passionate 'hotspot'.

All of these things (and more) can make one feel mildly if not **VERY** guilty about evangelism and hold you hostage from God's best for your leadership.

Listen... the devil wants to and WILL take advantage of these feelings of 'falling short'.

- He wants to **discourage** you... He'll make you **feel guilty** when the **subject** comes up. He'll seek to **silence** you with guilt and hinder you from the **influence** you can have!! And if he beats you up front, it will make it **nearly impossible to preach, teach and disciple your people in the area of evangelism!**
- **Let's not let the devil win!** Don't think you have to be on the 'top of our game' when it comes to evangelism in order to make a huge difference although he would like to convince you otherwise!!
- **God says even "in our weakness"** He wants and will use you to mobilize those you lead. People who are "not ashamed of the Gospel". People convinced that the Gospel, is "the power of GOD unto salvation". **You need to help them believe it and nurture that truth!**

[2 Tim. 4:5] Instructs church leaders to “do the work of an evangelist”. Not only does that include:

- Your own personal witness ...counseling, weddings, funerals, etc.
- It also includes the **INFLUENCE** you can have in **teaching** and **nurturing** the culture of evangelism. For many in your congregation **YOU** are their only trusted voice when it comes to spiritual things and you may only see them for 1 hour a week (if that). Don't separate “evangelism” and “discipleship”. As a pastor/leader think of **discipling** your people to have an “evangelistic mindset” for personal evangelism.
- **And initiate steps to Equip** those God has placed in your congregation who foster a passion for evangelism ... mobilizing them to help others become devoted followers of Jesus too and influence others in the congregation to do the same.

AS LEADERS, YOUR GREATEST INFLUENCE FOR EVANGELISM will come by fostering and maintaining a **CULTURE OF EVANGELISM** in your churches discipling them to keep “evangelism” a priority in their lives.

Simple Steps in Nurturing a CULTURE OF Evangelism...

REGULARLY REMIND YOUR PEOPLE OF “GOD’S PART” AND “OUR PART”

[2 Cor. 5:17-21]

God’s Part: **The Cross**

[v. 18] **God played His part** in the evangelism process by ‘reconciling us’ (non-Christians) “to Himself through Christ”.

- The **CROSS** was God’s Part. The **CROSS** created the ‘possibility of reconciliation’.
- The **BENEFITS** of the **CROSS** (God’s wrath deflected, forgiveness, the abundant Fruit of His Spirit, etc.) are received **WHEN** one places their faith and trust in Christ and what He did.

Our Part: “Ambassadors” on His behalf

[v. 19] God *gave and “committed to us the ministry of reconciliation”* by:

- ‘Evangels’ of the Good News of Jesus and the Cross (spokesmen who are reasoning with an ‘audience’ He has sent us to).
- God didn’t **ASK** if we might be **INTERESTED** in helping... if you had the time, etc.
- The almighty Creator of the universe... gave us the **RESPONSIBILITY**.

And it's not just a Responsibility... Disciple your people that the 'ministry of reconciliation' is... a tremendous **PRIVELEGE**.

- Every time someone walks across the line of faith they are a NEW CREATION! This New Creation happens in the heart. It's a miracle!! And that's why evangelism is a PRIVELEGE... IT'S NOT JUST A "HAVE TO" BUT A "GET TO".
- Think of it. When we become Christians, the God of this universe not only refuses to count our sins against us, but He also picks us up, brushes us off, looks us in the eye, and tells us He needs us. WHAT AN HONOR!!!

Yet we'll always have Bible-believing Christians give explanations as to why they don't actively seek to share their faith.

They sound VERY spiritual. They sound right... but that doesn't make them right and... it plays into the hand of the Devil.

For the most part, they give their explanations why they don't actively share when they want to get off the hook or to 'justify a lack of passion and action.

NOTE – And for everyone who overhears them, there will be other non-evangelistic ones who will HELP THEM JUSTIFY THEIR DISOBEDIENCE. It's like an 'ANTI-EVANGELISTIC CANCER' that takes hold & spreads.

- [I Cor. 5:6] "A little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough".

Here's where **Gracious, Consistent, Honest teaching** on this is good... even if some will balk at it. Like "**Preventive Medicine**", Not only will it serve to correct a wrong perspective, at the same time it will **IGNITE** those with a passion for evangelism who can help you and the church in nurturing a culture of evangelism.

NURTURE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM BY...

DISCIPLING PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE WE ARE IN

Likely the greatest **WEAPON** the devil uses to derail a passion for evangelism is a climate of **RIDICULE**.

- Each of us has an inherent need to feel loved and accepted by friends and family
- Our culture (TV, radio) ridicules those who take the Bible seriously. If you live out your beliefs, non-Christians think you're nutty... and they will tell you. The result is often, embarrassment... that often leaves one feeling silly or stupid.

- The comforting truth is that it's... **nothing new**. It's been going on for 2000 years.
 - [Heb. 10] Under unrelenting community pressure, the early Christians lost their zeal so much that many stopped gathering together. [David deSilva] *“Neighbors attempted to SHAME the deviants back into conformity.”*
 - **“Insults”** in their various forms, are a **primary weapon** the enemy uses to win his battle to silence Christians. And **his victory is the souls of non-Christians around us** – the very people he is using to insult us.

So remember, the devil is behind those who hurl insults. (don't get angry, Pray for and Love them...)

- Non-Christians won't fully “get it” until after conversion.
- [Paul] Who persecuted the early Christians said, “yet I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance.”
- And Insults today... may turn into Thanks later. [Stephen] ...”boldly proclaimed his faith” knowing that Paul might stone him... yet Thank him later. I'm sure it was one of the first things Paul did when he got to heaven.

NURTURE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM BY...

TEACHING WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DIE w/o GIVING THEIR LIVES TO CHRIST

[Suggest: do as a special message... better yet “salt ‘n pepper” regularly into messages]

It's not a ‘popular subject’ but its so important for Christians to fully embrace the reality of a Christ-less eternity.

[Note] **This is NOT to suggest or promote a “method” of arrogant witnessing that screams “turn or burn” but rather TO MOTIVATE CHRISTIANS TO WITNESS. It points to and stresses the urgency and need to witness.**

What you **teach** as a leader is crucial to nurture passion, urgency and intentionality for evangelism.

- [C.S. Lewis] Described a teacher he had who hindered his faith, saying *“Little by little, unconsciously, unintentionally... he loosened the whole framework, blurred ‘all the sharp edges’, of my belief”.*

[2 Thess. 1:6-9] a good passage to teach on what happens to those who die w/o Christ

“God is just” (He is loving, yes, but He is equally a God of justice.)

“He will punish”...

“Those who don’t know God or Obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus”...

They will be “**punished with everlasting destruction**”...

“**shut out from the presence of the Lord**”.

- Absent from everything God is: Hope, Love, Goodness, Joy, etc.
- [Lk. 16:28] A cry for evangelism from the very pit of hell (hades)!! “Go warn my brothers so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”
- If everyone goes to heaven when they die WHY would Jesus have to die on the cross?

The Cross, God’s sacrificial offering of Himself in Christ is an offering that **TURNS AWAY GOD’S HOLY WRATH** and offers an eternity “without pain or suffering... in His presence forever” (Rev. 21 & 22).

[John 3:36] “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

NURTURE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM BY...

NOT LETTING OTHER SIGNIFICANT KINGDOM RELATED ACTIVITIES TAKE HIGHER PRECEDENCE OVER EVANGELISM

Things like... feeding the poor, caring for the sick or fighting for human rights or ecology issues.

As significant and important as these issues are, it’s easy for them to take a higher precedence over evangelism because:

- You aren’t made fun of for helping the poor.
- And it’s personally gratifying to help others.

*****We can understand how these become “the main thing” in many churches... but that doesn’t make it right. Scripture clearly tells us to do BOTH. Meeting ‘Felt Needs’ is a great way to introduce pre-Christians to Jesus, the Giver of All Gifts.**

We are to help people find “daily bread” AND discover the “Bread of Life”.

But ultimately **Christianity is meant to solve** one issue: The **Problem of Human Sin**. That’s why Jesus came. As God deals with that core issue, He affects and influences other issues of life.

At the end of the day, for those without Christ... hunger, sickness, even death isn’t their biggest problem. Their biggest problem is dying **WITHOUT BEING PREPARED FOR DEATH**.

NURTURE A CULTURE OF EVANGELISM BY...

ENCOURAGING THOSE WHO POSSESS A PASSION AND DESIRE TO 'EVANGELIZE'

Utilize those who God has already placed in your congregations who are motivated to evangelize (Spiritual Gift tests indicate: approximately 5-10%).

- Get them involved... mobilize them... let them help you nurture Evangelism in your church. Let their “passion” and actions “rub off” on others.
- Provide some equipping in Evangelism... “discipleship in personal evangelism”. Utilize your ‘gifted’ teachers who foster a passion for evangelism lead this training.

And again, in your teaching, regularly remind your congregation what our daily perspective and availability as devoted followers of Jesus should be, e.g. as modeled by Paul in:

[Col. 4:2-6] A wonderful summary or guideline for discipling folks in the area of evangelism:

- **“Devoted to prayer”** – gets US in position to be used by God. It’s the “yes”; I’m willing.
- **“be watchful”** – seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- **“be thankful”** – God’s instruction to keep us encouraged (countering discouragement).
- **“proclaim the message”** – to put it into words!
- **“speak it clearly”** – with understanding... wisdom and discernment (provide discipling in evangelism and trusting the Holy Spirit to work through them and in those they witness).
 - Many Christians can share their faith better than they think. It’s just a matter of helping them organize their thoughts. This gives them confidence in their ability to share their faith.

[Conclusion]

Help them grasp the concept of Lordship... “taking up our cross daily”; saying “**YES**” to God. That the “L” in Lord stands for Leader.

[Larry Osborne – author] ...points out that instead of letting God be Lord of our lives, we treat Him more like our **Personal Consultant**. He writes:

“Now a consultant is someone whose wisdom we highly value and listen to, but at the end of the day, we make the final decision. That’s why they are called ‘consultants’. Here’s the problem: God doesn’t do consulting. He does GOD. When we treat Him as a consultant, He simply stops showing up for the meetings.”

AS LEADERS, God wants to use you to GREATLY INFLUENCE EVANGELISM in your church. It will come by fostering and maintaining a CULTURE OF EVANGELISM, discipling those in your church to keep “evangelism” a priority in their lives.