

Spiritual Progress: Evangelism

Tim Conway | *illbehonest.com*

So, I do want us this morning to give our attention to the topic of evangelism. If we think about our Christian life and making more progress. Let's think about reaching the lost for these next few minutes. Let's pray. Father, I can remember, think about my own heart being stirred reading the biography of George Whitefield, imagining him preaching up and down this East Coast to great crowds and people converted. Men and women filling the churches in those days. We look at New England and it seems to be a barren place. But Lord, if You but speak the word, just as it is in the desert when the rains come, You send those rains and flowers break forth. You can cause life. And we ask You, Lord, please, life. Spiritual life. Conversions.

Lord, we pray that this land may live again; that the churches may be filled again; that they may be praising the glories of our Lord Jesus Christ again. We ask You to have mercy upon our land. But I pray, Father, that You'd have mercy upon Your people. May we once again have the fire, the zeal to take the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the dying and to the perishing. Lord, I pray that in some way You would use the words that are about to be said to kindle a fire in my own heart, my brothers and sisters in this place, I ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Winning Souls

Well, if you have your Bible, I think one of the classic texts on evangelism that we find in our Bibles is in 1 Corinthians 9. If you have your Bible, turn there. 1 Corinthians 9. 1 Corinthians 9:19. The Apostle Paul says this, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them." He that winneth souls is wise. This is not carnal language to talk this way. This is not Arminian language to talk this way. Winning souls. Don't ever let your understanding of the sovereignty of God remove that kind of verbiage from your language. We can win souls. Being soul-winners. Paul - he made himself a servant to all that he might win. Winning - we think, isn't that a strange word to apply to going after souls? It can become such common language, maybe you don't even think about it. We talk about winning - like a race. Winning in sports. To win a soul. Over against what? What's the opposite of winning? If you don't win, you...? Lose. We lose people. "To the Jews, I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ that I might win those outside the law. To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some, and I do it all for the sake of the Gospel."

Last night, Brother Mack brought up C.T. Studd. I remember several years ago, Andy Hamilton speaking about C.T. Studd. He said - and I saw this, I think Dan Sem loaned me C.T. Studd's biography back when Dan was still in the states. And Andy was referring to this, that in the front part of the book, you can find a picture of C.T. Studd with all of his athletic friends and his rich friends. And you go to the end of the book, and you find C.T. Studd sitting around his hut in Africa with all these converted - were they pygmy's? I don't remember.

C.T. Studd. He had a way with words. I want to give you a quote. He was strong - sometimes caustic. Sometimes undoubtedly offensive. I think I chose some words that are strong. C.T. Studd said this, "Christ's call is to feed the hungry, not the full; to save the lost, not the stiff-necked; not to call the scoffers, but sinners to repentance; not to build and furnish comfortable chapels, churches, cathedrals at home, in which to rock Christian professors to sleep by means of clever essays, stereotyped prayers, and artistic musical performances, but to raise living churches of souls among the destitute; to capture men from the devil's clutches and snatch them from the very jaws of hell. To enlist and train men and women for Jesus and make them into an almighty army of God, but this can only be accomplished by a red hot, unconventional, unfettered Holy Ghost religion where neither church nor state, neither man nor traditions are worshiped or preached, but only Christ and Him crucified." He says this, "Nail the colors to the mast. That is the right thing to do. And therefore, that is what we must do, and do it now. What colors? The colors of Christ. The work He has given us to do. The evangelization of the unevangelized. Christ wants not nibblers of the possible, but grabbers of the impossible, by faith in the omnipotence, fidelity, and wisdom of the almighty Savior who gave the command. Is there a wall in our path? By our God, we'll leap over it. Are there lions and scorpions in our way? We will trample them under our feet. Does a mountain bar our progress? Saying 'be thou removed and cast into the sea' we will march on. Soldiers of Jesus never surrender. Nail the colors to the mast."

Our churches should be armies of evangelists, soul winners. But why does it tend not to be? I want to talk right here by way of introduction to this message. What are some of the reasons that evangelism is not a priority in many churches today? And I'm talking especially reformed churches. Especially churches that lift up books by Martyn Lloyd-Jones; that lift up books by John G. Paton or about him. Why are some of the reasons? And I'm not saying that everybody here is unevangelistic. And I'm not saying that all of our churches are unevangelistic. But I'm just saying that throughout those churches that would say they hold to this reformed faith or identify with Calvinistic doctrine, the truth is that many of the churches in the reformed movement are not very evangelistic and I just want us to consider some of the reasons why.

Why Are We Not More Evangelistic?

Number one. Evangelism - think about it. If I said, okay. We're breaking up the service right now. We're all heading out this door and we're going to evangelize. How are we going to do it? We're going to stop people on the street out here and we're going to talk to them about the Lord. Immediately, some of you would feel traumatized by that reality. There is a confrontational sense to evangelism. You have to break into people's private space. You have to confront people by a truth that quite honestly, a lot of people don't want to hear, they find offensive. There tends to be persecution. People look at you. People laugh at you. People will walk away from you. People will argue with you. There is a confrontational nature to evangelism. This man here who said that he uses all these means that he might save some, if you follow his path through the book of Acts, you'll find that they bounce stones off of his head.

Why? Because he went places proclaiming Christ. If you proclaim Christ, Jesus said this: They are going to hate you. If you're not of the world, if you're not one of their own, they're going

to hate you. And He said they hated Me, and they're going to hate you too. And that makes evangelism right from the start somewhat intimidating to know... if you are a sheep, if you are a lamb, and you go out into the midst of wolves, you just take a lamb and you throw it in the midst of wolves, you know what happens. There is something that to our carnal self and to our fleshly self, we recoil from that. Right? I mean, who likes to be like a lamb and just jump in the midst of wolves? You don't like that. That is not natural to like that. And so there is that reality. We don't like to make others feel uncomfortable.

But here's the problem: If you get a feeling for C.T. Studd, it's: there is something to be accomplished. There is something the Lord wants us to do. God is on our side. We can go do this. And in the face of these things, we need boldness. You know what courage is. Courage doesn't mean that you're never afraid, but it means that you press on in the face of that fear. We need courage. Because God is on our side. And Jesus said this. We know this. Jesus said that whoever is ashamed "of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." One of the things about living in 21st century America is that we have to admit it. We tend to be affluent and that affluency makes us soft. And soft people don't endure hardship well and the truth is there are certain hardships. Yes, there are times you can sit down with people. There are times I have sat down with my lost friends, my lost family members, my lost co-workers, or even people in door-to-door ministry or stopping somebody on the street. And they are not antagonistic. They don't want to argue. They're very open, receptive, and even grateful and thankful. That happens sometimes. But there are other times, it does not happen. There are times the door will be slammed in your face. There are times there will be persecution. There are times - no, not in this country, they're not going to put us to death, but that softness in our life can make it difficult to put ourselves in difficult positions. So that's one thing to think about. We don't like this confrontational nature of evangelism.

A second thing. We feel inadequate. That maybe is not a bad thing to feel. But it's not a reason not to go. It's not a reason to stay silent. Inadequacy. You know, if ever there was a guy that was inadequate to speak the Gospel to people, I would say a guy that yesterday didn't have any clothes on, running around naked, out in the midst of the tombs. If we brought a guy in here who yesterday was running around in the cemetery down the street with no clothes on, and he was able to break out of jail and bust handcuffs all the time, and he came in here today and he was wonderfully converted and sitting in here clothed and in his right mind, you might say, well, you know, if ever there's anybody a novice who probably shouldn't be out there talking to people, it would be this guy. And yet, it's exactly that kind of guy that Jesus said, "No, you can't get in the boat with Me. You know what I want you to do? I want you to go back home and you tell those people what great things the Lord has done for you." (incomplete thought) We ought not to feel that our inadequacy should keep us from doing it. Yes, there is an inadequacy. Paul himself said - the one who said that he used all these means to win some - he himself said: who is sufficient for these things? This is a weighty thing. We're a fragrance of life to some; a fragrance of death to the others. But listen, yes, we feel inadequate. But inadequacy didn't keep Jesus from telling the converted demoniac to go back to his hometown and tell all the people. Certainly if the demoniac was charged by the Lord to do that, then everyone of us should be in the same place to do the same.

How about a third reason we're not more involved, more committed to this evangelistic endeavor? We can get discouraged by an apparent lack of results. I was just talking to a couple brothers last night. We're going to go down to New York later today. And I know there's a group of brethren down there. They've been going at it. Trying to plant a church for four years. Perhaps, there isn't much seen of fruit. Let me tell you something. When our church started, we went 16 months - no additions to the church. In fact, we had subtractions from the church. You know what happened when William Carey went over to India? He preached and he preached. And he set forth the truth. And he began to acquire languages. And he set up some indigo (is that the right word?) - he was trying to produce income so that the churches back in England didn't have to support him. And he sought to be self-supporting. And he was getting the Gospel out. And you know it was seven years before he had one convert.

If you've ever read the biography, one man. I've been at that location there (incomplete thought) in Calcutta. I've been there at the place on the river where he baptized that guy. Seven years. Seven years. (incomplete thought) I preached right in front of that baptismal where Adoniram Judson was baptized. I think William Marshman baptized him there. Adoniram Judson. Six to seven years of laboring in Burma. He left Calcutta. He went over to Burma. Providential events - he landed there. Years. You're in New England. It can feel like it's burnt over here. The Gospel was preached. But you remember this, there wasn't just a first Great Awakening. There was a second Great Awakening. There were revivals in the 1850's.

What am I saying here? There's a cycle. Just because the Gospel flourished here once and now it may not be, does not mean that it may not again. And even if it doesn't again, you can look around the world and you can find local places where God moves. And you remember this, that when they walked in there to Samaria, and all those Samaritans were coming out, Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "Look, you're reaping a harvest right here where others labored." It may be that in our day, we labor. It may be in our day, we lay out the Gospel seed. And it may be that in our lifetime, we don't see it bring forth a harvest. But it may in the next generation. We may take part. There are those that sow. There are those that reap. Look, it's a big picture. It's a big package. But I can tell you this, that after 16 months, we began to see people added. And we began to see people converted.

In fact, when Charles Leiter came down, I remember him saying speaking to people in our church, he said most of the people had been saved in the last three years. The Lord began bringing us a bunch. I'm not saying it was all necessarily an outworking of our evangelism. It was just that God was saving. I'll tell you quite honestly, Paul Washer's shocking youth message seemed to save so many people across this United States of ours and around the world, that churches were springing up in different places and continue to through the Internet ministry. And you can say, "I'm not a Paul Washer." Well, no, neither am I, but that's okay. Neither was the demoniac. Well, I don't know. Maybe he was.

But brethren, I know this. Jesus said I've got these sheep here, but I've got other sheep. And I need to bring them too. And you can be sure of this, God has an elect people. They're going to get saved. And I'll tell you how they get saved. They get saved through the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus said He's bringing them in. He's going to gather them. You know, Isaiah came along. He said who has believed our report? It's true, there are times we wonder Lord, is anybody saved? Is anybody getting saved? There can be dry periods. But you know, when

Jesus wanted to give a lesson on evangelism, you know what He did? He said hey guys, throw that net over the side of the boat. Peter's like Lord, we fished all night. There was no catch. Lord, we're fisherman. We fished last night. That's when you fish. You're telling us to throw it out here. You're a carpenter. Anyway, they knew He was the Lord. They did it. And they pulled in such a catch. And Jesus was not doing that simply to give them some extra cash in their pocket. He was doing that as a lesson. "I am going to make you fishers of men."

And the truth is that in the very place on the very Sea of Galilee where there was apparently little success, no success the night before, that day there was lots of success. You know what we don't know? We don't know from one day to the next when God is going to break forth. We know this, that the way He breaks forth is through the proclamation of the truth. You go back to the day of Pentecost. 3,000 people are saved. But you know what? If those disciples would have sat in the Upper Room, it wouldn't have happened. Why? Because God is a God of means. The men, the women, had to come down. 120 needed to come down from the Upper Room and do what? Proclaim Christ. Proclaim His death and His resurrection. And through that, God brought in a great harvest.

Or how about another reason? I'm afraid that this is a big one. We incorrectly assume that because we hold to the doctrines of grace, and because we can almost - maybe not almost - maybe over the top; we can pride ourselves: Well, we hold to the doctrine of Spurgeon. Calvin. Luther. And sometimes we can think that because we have the right doctrine, that automatically guarantees success. Look, we need to have the right doctrine. Undoubtedly, we need to have it right. You know what Scripture says. We're to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. We certainly don't want to depart. We don't want to go off into error. We don't want to minimize the importance of having the truth. But this Gospel that we are perfecting; these doctrines of justification that we want to work out to perfection and sanctification and propitiation and regeneration - and we want to be able to articulate all the doctrines right. Listen, if we just pride ourselves and carry around our big stack of books all the time and we don't go out the door, I'll guarantee you, we will not see success. Our churches will end up dying.

Now, I know today, we can reach people other ways than by going on our feet out the door. And of course, we can write books and books can reach people. But you know what the reality is? The people that are over across the street in that bar right now, they are not going to grab C.T. Studd, Paton, or Martyn Lloyd-Jones. They're not going to come over here and buy the books off that table. Maybe on the Internet - the Internet is an incredibly useful tool. They search. They come across things. A lot of people were looking for what they didn't expect to find when they came across that "Shocking Youth Message" on the Internet. Or they're looking for other things or they're feeling an emptiness in their soul. There's enough stuff on the Internet about sexual immorality and the sin of it and people stumble across that. But we don't want to assume. Brethren, we don't want to assume. You know, we can get to the place where we're kind of like John and James. Lord, we saw somebody out there and they weren't one of us. They were casting out demons and we tried to forbid them. We don't want them doing that. They're not one of us. They're not in our inner circles. We don't want to think like that. You remember, it's not having the right books on your shelf that's the real issue. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the spiritual elites in His day, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Just remember that. We need the right doctrine, but if that right doctrine is separated from showing mercy - it's a

mercy to take the Gospel out that door. And He desires mercy. He went out that door. And you remember when He spoke that, He was eating with the tax collectors and the sinners. He desires mercy.

How about another reason that we're sometimes slow to take up the evangelistic endeavor? Hyper-Calvinism. That's one of the dangers embracing the truths. You know, we can distort the truths of Scripture to where we come up with conclusions that we should never come up with. We can grab hold of the doctrine of election and end up where God never intended us to end up. Listen, Romans 9. We often go to Romans 9. We say, see? God loves who He's going to love and He hates who He's going to hate. He has compassion upon whom He's going to have compassion, and He hardened Pharaoh. He showed mercy to Moses. Isn't that what Scripture teaches? I trust, do we not believe that God is altogether in control and sovereign? Do we not believe that? I hope you believe that. But do you know in one of the most sovereignty-emphasized, sovereignty-rich portions of Scripture, have you ever really listened to the heart of Paul there? He said when it comes to my brethren according to the flesh, he said I could wish myself accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren according to the flesh. When you get over to the beginning of chapter 10, he says my prayer for them is they be saved. Did he look at the sovereignty of God and say: Well, God's going to do what God's going to do and if these guys aren't elect, well, God's just going to damn them and so be it. Just cold and callous and hyper-Calvinistic. That's not what you find. You find his heart gushed for these. Did he recognize God was sovereign? He did. But his desire was, oh, that they might be saved. I pray that they might be saved. If I could be cut off from Christ for them, I would do that. Before we preach the doctrines that Paul preached, it's important that we have the heart that Paul had.

Another reason. Doesn't God say "come out from among them"? He does. He does, and the problem is that what can happen is we step back from the world. We homeschool our kids. Everything's protected. We do our things in this sterilized Christian culture. We step back from the world. It says be separate from them. But you remember this. Brothers and sisters, what did they accuse Jesus of being? A friend of who? Tax collectors and sinners. Do you know Luke 15? Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon called "The Approachableness of Christ" from Luke 15:1. You know what it says there? It says that these tax collectors and these sinners were coming to Christ. They found Christ approachable. And He was glad to be with them. What would that be like to go to a party at Matthew's house? With a bunch of sinners? Real, red-blooded sinners. You think they might have slipped some of them? And spoken profanity? Probably. But I also think that being in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ - that had a profound impact on people. But He was there. He was there. Did He enter into their sin? No, but He entered into where sinners were. He rubbed shoulders with them. He was a friend of sinners. He didn't become sinful by their sinful practices, but He definitely was in their midst.

How about this one? My brothers and sisters, we can forget about the absolute seriousness. We can forget about the severity of God's wrath, of God's judgment. Very well known quote from Spurgeon. You probably all have heard this. "If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees imploring them to stay." Have you ever read, "He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty"? Have you ever read things like that? This is true. Jesus telling sinners, "Depart from Me you workers of iniquity." That's reality. We have to think like that.

When you see people, they're not just part of the scenery. Well, here we are in Portland, Maine. People are vacationing. Well, it's part of the picture. People are walking by in shorts. People are walking by in their vacation casual attire. They've got their sandals on and their Hawaiian shirt. You know, it's part of the picture. There they are at the lighthouse. It's just part of the picture. These are souls who in very short years from now, they're going to be in flames. They know not the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not sought salvation in Him. They are going to perish. And you know what the vast majority do not know the Gospel that you know. The vast majority of those people have not heard what you've heard and rejected it. Some have but the most haven't. The most haven't heard. They don't know. Nobody's told them. They don't have anybody in their family who's a Christian. They don't know. And hell is real. We forget the severity of God's wrath. It's eternal.

How about this? Jesus said that the love of many will grow cold. Sometimes that's the issue. Our love is cold. Do you know when you're reading the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said this: "If you love those who love you, what reward do you have?" He said, "Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" Think about that. We do love our children. We do love our parents. We do love our close friends. We love our husbands, our wives. That's normal. The lost do that. The tax collectors do that. Our love as Christians - we're to love our enemies. We're to love the souls of the people around us. If anybody is to be a lover of mankind, it's the disciples of Jesus Christ. He has saved us to love. The first aspect, the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit of God is love. It is a loving thing to take the Gospel to people; to give them that one message, that one remedy that would deliver their souls from the wrath of Almighty God. Don't let your love grow cold. One of the best ways to keep that love hot and keep that love fervant is to stay close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because as we behold Him, we become like Him. From one degree of glory to the next. That glory. He had a love for sinners. He came to seek and save the lost. When you're around Jesus, you're around Him who is love. You're around Him who loved sinners and gave Himself for sinners. And you spend lots of time beholding Him and in His presence, and that will begin to affect you and permeate your own person.

How about a low esteem for the glory of God? I read somewhere like in Romans 15 that Jesus became a servant. Why? To gather in the Gentiles for the glory of God. You remember the Moravian cry? May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of His suffering. Do you know Jesus Christ went to the cross to pay His life's blood for a people? Those people are out here. Those elect people are out here. And we don't know where they are. There's no brand on their forehead. It could be any of them. But I'll tell you this, as elect as they may be and as much as Christ may have spilled His blood for them, they will not be brought until they hear of a proclaimed Christ. That's just a reality. And if you don't do it, then He'll use somebody else to do it.

And that brings me to my next point. We forget about God's method of salvation. Yes, we preach in the church. But have you ever read? The primary reason that we preach in the church is for what? Ephesians 4. Why were pastors/teachers given to the church? To equip the saints for the work of the ministry. You know what? People do come into churches and they do get saved. People do get saved within the walls of churches. But, that is not what Jesus Christ told us in the Great Commission. He didn't say: Stay within the confines of your church building walls, your meeting place, the chapel, and preach the Gospel forever and always right there in

that context. He did not say that. He said, "Go!" Is that not what the parable says? Go into the highways and the hedges and compel them to come in. It's not: Wait for them to come in.

Because listen, the reality is - we were just up at that lighthouse yesterday. I have that imagery in my mind. There was a race. There were all sorts of people. They're moving all around there. All sorts of people. By and large, the majority of which do not know the Lord. Are they going to come in here? You know the reality. 90% of the people in Portland, Maine will not come into a church. And 99.9% would never come into a church like this. We are supposed to go to the nations and make disciples. That's our calling. Remember, go. Go to them. Go find them out. Don't simply wait for them to come to you. That's great when people do come to us and you should pray that people will come to us. You should pray for opportunities. You should pray that people will come and sit next to you on the airplane or sit next to you on the bus or be next to you in the line in the supermarket. You can pray for opportunities like that.

But the reality is we are to go. It just occurs to me as I think about it. Listen, we are told to visit the widow. But do you know what? If you don't visit the widow, there's maybe some social program here in Portland that would send some assistance to them. You may not visit the orphan, but the state's got a system set up that deals with orphans. That's a reality. If you don't feed the poor, well, some soup kitchen - it might be secular - down the street may do that. But I'll tell you this, if you don't preach the Gospel, let me ask you this, who is going to? Who is going to preach the Gospel? What? Are you going to wait for the Arminians? You say, well, we don't believe they have all the truth. We don't believe they have the right truth. You think the Catholics? We don't believe they have the truth? Are you going to let the JW's do it? That's anathema. We don't want them coming to our door. See, the Mormons will run the streets. The JW's will run the streets. And we sit in here and we say we've got the right stack of books. We've got the right theology on our shelf, and then what? Are we going to sit tight? We're going to let the Mormons do it, the JW's do it. We're going to let them run up and down the streets.

But then what? We're going to sit here, curse the darkness, but we'll stay put. And if some lost person ventures into our church, we all get excited. We all key in on them. That is good if somebody comes in like that. You key in on them. But you know what? We are to preach here to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Whatever ministry. Now look, I'm not saying that everybody's ministry is necessarily and particularly and specifically to go out and to go up and down the streets and to do door-to-door ministry. There's many ways to evangelize. There's many ways to reach people. You may feel very comfortable in a prison. Some will not feel comfortable. You may feel more comfortable in the nursing home. Some people - that's not where they want to go. Maybe as a teacher. Mothers, you can pour yourself into your neighbors, into your own children, into your family members. There's all manner of ways. We've got a world all around us.

How about this? We fail to realize our neighbor's blood is seriously our own concern. Now listen, Paul said this twice in the book of Acts. He said, "When they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads.'" Listen to what he said. "I am innocent. From now on, I'll go to the Gentiles." You need to stop and hear those words. "I am innocent." What is he saying? I'll tell you what he's saying. That if I would not have proclaimed the Gospel to them, I would not be innocent. Their blood is on their heads because I preached the Gospel to them. I'm innocent. Their blood's on their own head. You

know what he's saying? If I wouldn't have preached the Gospel to them, I would not be innocent, and their blood would be on me. Listen to this. "Therefore, I testify to you this day, I am innocent of the blood of all of you. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." That he said to the Ephesian elders. What Paul is saying - Paul walked around with this sense that if I don't proclaim the whole counsel of God to people, their blood is on me.

Can you imagine? You have the truth. You live in a neighborhood or you live in a city, your neighbors don't even know you're a Christian. If you take verses like this seriously, you have to start to believe that if you live your life and you don't touch those around you with the truth, you're not innocent. Let us be innocent in this. We've been talking about prayer. Isaiah said this, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood." Did you know our churches' hands can be full of blood? Because we're not innocent. Because there's people all around us, and we've been silent. Our silence can cause other people's blood to be on our heads. You know, I'm really convinced of this, that when churches are very prayerfully pursuing souls they are going to find that the church's prayers - you notice the connection. You pray many prayers, but I'm not answering those prayers because your hands are full of blood. Well, that may be abortion. It may be actual bloodshed, but people's blood can be upon us by other ways than just murder. People's blood can be on your head if you withhold the cure.

How about this? We become overly involved in our church. On the inside, we get problems. In fact, my first pastor in Texas before we went out and started Grace - Pat Horner - I asked him one time, brother, what's the most difficult thing in your estimation about being in the ministry? And he said trying to cope with the issues inside the church and still stay outwardly focused. There are problems in the church. Jesse was saying it in his messages to us that oftentimes, you know, you can come into the pastorate and you can think, yes, we're going to guard the church from all these heresies that come at us from the outside, and you end up recognizing that like only one-tenth of one percent of the problems that arise in the church come from the outside. Most all the problems come from within. And as we're dealing with the problems within, you've got disciplinary situations. You've got possible schisms and uprisings, or possible church splitting situations. Different things come up. Heresies arise within the church. Problematic people arise within the church. People who are false brethren are there. Wolves arise even in the leadership. You've got to remove somebody from the diaconate or from the eldership. You've got difficulties. Scandals arise. Things you just didn't imagine just come at you. Problems arise. And they can be very distracting. And as a pastor, you can spend a lot of time losing sleep over protecting the unity of the church, protecting the church. And suddenly, you're not thinking about the people perishing all around you. You're just trying to survive. And you're trying to help the church survive.

Or there's this: We have a misconception about who should be involved. Now I talked about inadequacy before, but sometimes we think: Well, I'm not an evangelist. I'm not a pastor. And in some circles - maybe even in many of the reformed circles, the mindset is: the pastor should be doing that. The pastor does that. Look, the church is not a one man ministry. The pastor's primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. All of you have a responsibility to be doing the ministries that God has given to you. God has given certain spiritual gifts to each one of you. Some are more evangelistic. And you know what? Even if you

feel like Moses - you know, you're tongue-tied and you feel like you need your Aaron, you can pray. You can pray for souls. You can attend the prayer meeting. Prayer meetings should be rich in praying for souls. Listen, if in your prayer meetings, you're praying more for health issues than you are for souls and for salvation, it's wrong. Get that thing right. Look, all of us are going to die. All of us are going to get a disease or have some kind of accident or some situation from which we will not escape death. We're all headed towards that. I'm not saying you can't pray - I didn't find Paul praying for Timothy when he had some stomach ailment. He just said drink some wine. Here's some Advil. But now, forget the sore toe. Let's pray. Our children are perishing! Our parents are perishing! Time is ticking. God forbid... let the hospitals be filled, but if we're in a time of revival, then praise the Lord! If people are saved and they're on a sickbed, that's a good place to be. Saved! No matter what your situation, if you're saved, you're safe! You're secure. You're rescued. You're redeemed.

How about an undue emphasis on academics? And listen to me, undue emphasis. Should we study? Yes. Should we study to show ourselves approved? Absolutely. Is there a knowledge that needs to be increased? Absolutely. There is a knowledge of God that Paul prays that we would have. There is a knowledge that puffs up. How can you tell when we have reached a level of undue academics? I would say this, when we're learning all the time, but nothing ever gets done. We're learning, learning, learning, learning, but we're not turning the world upside down. Remember how they talked about those early Christians? These men have turned the world upside down! Listen, let's learn. Let's learn. Let's study. But so as to turn the world upside down for the Lord Jesus Christ. When we just study, study, study, read our books, read our books, so that we can argue on the Internet, get on Facebook and argue and try to win the doctrinal battle, we've got it all wrong.

How about this one? Bad leadership. Hebrews 13: "Remember your leaders, imitate their faith." Some leaders don't have any faith that God's going to save anybody. And you can see it by the way they lead the church and by the actions. They don't give much concern. They don't talk about souls being rescued.

Or there's this: We're lost. And therefore, without Christian faith, without Christian compassion and love. Spurgeon said this: "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved. Be sure of that." Boy, he was dogmatic there. How about another quote from C.T. Studd? "Too long have we been waiting for one another to begin. The time for waiting is past. The hour of God has struck. War is declared. In God's holy name, let us arise and build. The God of heaven - He will fight for us as we for Him. We will not build on the sand, but on the bedrock of the sayings of Christ and the gates and minions of hell shall not prevail against us. Should such men as we fear? Before the whole world, I, before the sleepy, lukewarm, faithless, namby-pamby Christian world - we will dare to trust our God. We will venture our all for Him. We will live and we will die for Him. And we will do it with His joy unspeakable, singing aloud in our hearts. We will a thousand times sooner die trusting only in our God than live trusting in man. And when we come to this position, the battle is already won. And the end of the glorious campaign in sight. We will have the real holiness of God, not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts. We will have a masculine holiness. One of daring faith and works for Jesus Christ." Now, that was the introduction. Here - and this will be fast - Paul said that he used all means. Let's just think about that. He used all means that he might save some. Now,

let's not be cowards. Can you talk like Paul talked? "That I might save some." Can you talk that way? We don't talk that way. We don't like to talk that way. Paul talked that way. "That I might save some." That he might save some. What I want to emphasize is the means there. Obviously, Paul knew that salvation rested with God. If anybody knew it, he knew it. But when he said that he's using all the means that he might save some, recognize that. There is a place for means. We need to use the means.

I was talking to a brother yesterday. He's a fisherman. He told me he fishes for trout, for perch, for landlocked salmon - I think were the three fish. You know, since I've lived in Texas, I haven't fished once. But when I grew up in Michigan, I fished a lot. A lot of lakes. I knew this. That when I went fishing - my friends and I - we were all into lures. What kind of lure have you got? We wanted the good lure. And you know, you use those lures. They may look real good. Some of the worst, shabby looking things were amazing to catch all sorts of fish. You didn't care what they looked like, how much they cost. You cared if they caught fish. Maybe you used live bait. You wanted to use what worked. None of us ever said: Well, God is sovereign, and so if that fish was foreordained to come over and sink its lips around my hook, it's going to happen. And so whether I put a nightcrawler on there or I squish a ball of dough around that treble hook... nobody talks like that. If you're a fly fisherman for trout, you want the perfect fly. It's no different. God uses means. And those who fish with the best bait and the best lures, catch the most fish. That's the reality. That's the way it is with evangelism as well. Paul didn't say: God's sovereign, so good, let's sit back, relax, watch God save. This should impact us. We need to use means.

The Means of Evangelism

Now, let me talk about means. Paul could plant. Apollos could water. But I'll tell you in the end, we don't want to make light of God's sovereignty in this. Brethren, I encourage you, pray, pray, pray. Evangelize and pray. Evangelize and pray. Speak of the cross to your lost neighbors, your lost family members, and pray and pray and fast. Call your churches to times of dedicated prayer and fasting. And plead for souls. Plead for souls. As I said it before, if your prayer meetings begin to diverge into praying for all sorts of unnecessary things - they're praying for Aunt Tilda's dog. Somebody stand up and say: Enough! Stop! Stop. The world is perishing. And we can call upon the Lord God and He said: if you ask, you shall receive. Put salvation right in there. If we ask God to save - if you ask, you will receive. Jesus said you ask whatsoever you will in My name, He said, "I will do it." Did Jesus Christ come to save sinners? Did He spill His blood? He did. Call upon Him. Lord - go back to the order and argument. Lay your arguments out there. Lay your arguments why He should save. Make the case. Do you not have a case for why He should save your children? Have you not worked on thinking through like Mueller did - he would search the Scriptures for days to come up with a promise. Have you never searched for those promises for your lost family members? Your lost co-workers? Your lost neighbors? The lost citizens of wherever you live? Have you not thought that way? We need to be thinking that way. We need to come up with our case and lay it before the Lord. Lord, save sinners! Save them! We need to pray. You talk about the means. Lay hold on the Lord in prayer. Fast. Call the churches to fasting. Why? For souls. Listen, if the church isn't growing, call the church to prayer and fasting. You say, we've done that. Continue. Lay, cling, hold on to Him like

Jacob until you get the blessing. Hold on to Him. It may be 7 years like it was with William Carey. I guarantee you he was on his knees a lot. Adoniram Judson - these men. These men were prayer warriors. And during these seasons of drought and famine, where would you find them? Undoubtedly you'd find them on their knees pleading: Lord, save this dark land. Save these people. (incomplete thought) You want an argument? Just look to the cross! What an argument to plead! Lord, You sent Your Son to suffer. To suffer and to die. Prayer.

Ask yourself this: What message is most likely to bait, capture? You know what jumps out at me? When you get to the end of John's Gospel, John says the Lord Jesus Christ, He did lots of miracles, lots of signs. We couldn't write enough books to contain all that He did. John said this: I have given you a couple handfuls of His miracles. Why? So that you might believe He's the Christ, the Son of God, and in believing, you might have life. And you know what? On that same note, Jesus - He looked at those cities in Galilee, and He found fault with them because they did not repent when they saw the miracles, the works, the signs that He did. He expected them to repent. You know what you want to do? Show them the miraculous Christ. Show them His miracles. Show them what He did. Tell them how He healed. Tell them what He did for the blind. Tell them what He did for the leper. Tell them that He raised the dead. Tell them that He Himself came forth from the dead. Show Him. Tell Him. Do you know what His first miracle was? Tell the world that. He turned water into wine. Tell people. I mean, you can go to somebody's door here in Portland. Do you know the first thing that Jesus Christ did when He did miracles? He turned water into wine. You have any idea what that speaks? What kind of Savior we have! You tell them. That is calculated to be good bait. You show them the supernatural Christ. You tell them about Him. You tell them repent. Change their mind. You believe in this one.

You know, recently, just dealing with that word "repentance." I was down in Nicaragua and we were having a module there and we were talking about evangelizing people and telling people to repent. You know, that idea is a change of mind. Or actually the English word: to rethink. Rethink and believe. So often, we talk about turning from sin, but the real issue is it's the change of mind behind why we turn from sin. And this guy said, you know, it's offensive to tell people that. And that's right. It is offensive. When we say to the sinner: you think all is well. You need to rethink that. It's not well. You may be vacationing up here from New York or New Hampshire or wherever. You may think it's great. You can go out to the oceanside and look at lighthouses and enjoy the summer. But it's not well. You may be driving a nice car and God may have heaped many of His kindnesses on you, but it is not well. He has shown His kindnesses to you and those kindnesses are meant to lead you to repentance. They're not to make you think that it's okay. You need to rethink that. It is not okay. Do not think that going out in your rebellion like you are and trusting in your own good works that it's all going to work out in the end; don't go on thinking that God is smiling at you no matter how you live because that is not right. And that is wrong. And stop thinking little thoughts about this miraculous working Christ as though you don't need Him in your life. Rethink that because you do. You need a substitutionary atonement. You need somebody to pay for your sin. Is that offensive? Yes, that's offensive, because it attacks man right at his self-righteousness. And you're touching the very heart of the sinner there. That's offensive to sinners.

Remember this: Not one size fits all. Look, I like watching Ray Comfort. I appreciate his interaction. He's sharp on his feet. But did you hear Paul? To these people over here, I became like that. To these people over here, I became like that. To these people over here, I became like them. Have you ever noticed Jesus didn't have one simple system? You can't find where He said: "have you ever lied?" Yes, I've lied. "Have you ever committed adultery?" Well, no, I've never done that. "Have you ever looked at a woman with lust?" Well, yeah, I've done that. You know, you kind of go through the little system there. The Bible doesn't have a system. And so be careful there. "To the Jews, I became as a Jew." To those under the law, he became as one under the law. (incomplete thought) Jesus used many different approaches. Not just one system. You know what's really important is that we know our Bibles. That's what's important - that you know truth. You have a good grasp. Really look at how Jesus spoke to people. Look at how the early preachers spoke to people. I would say this: throw seed everywhere. Brethren, everywhere. Have tracts. Have DVD's. Spread it everywhere. Get on the Internet. Have an Internet presence. People use the Internet. Use it. Use the airwaves. Use the radio. Go everywhere. You remember how the guy sowing the seed in the parable of the soils - he just threw it everywhere. He threw it on the hard-packed path. He threw it everywhere! On the rocky soil. Over here where the weeds were likely to grow. He's just liberal. Throw it everywhere. Throw it everywhere. And then come back into the prayer meetings and pray over that seed. Water it with your prayers. Just spread it everywhere. Everywhere. Everywhere. I'll say this again, new Christians can make some of the best evangelists. And we could go back to the demoniac.

Let me say this. Willing to become dirty. Jesse was telling us last night, he was proclaiming the truth and some guy out of a gang got converted. And he said it was Christmas Eve and he gets a call from this guy and this guy's coming over with his thug friends. And it's like: we're coming. And Jesse wasn't expecting them. You're coming? (incomplete thought) I can imagine. You have a Christmas tree. So you've got the picture in your mind. Jesse's family - all happy. Middle class American family sitting around and a Christmas tree and it's Christmas Eve. And then the gangsters call. We're coming! If you want to reach sinners, you're going to get dirty. Listen, just a snapshot. Luke 7. Geoffrey Thomas was at our conference recently. He recommended a book on evangelism. I read it. The author of that book targets Luke 7. It's fantastic. Why? What do you have there? You have a Roman centurion and Jesus is dealing with him. Now you have to recognize this. As a Jew, Gentiles were unclean. They were defiling. So Jesus, He gives Himself to the Roman centurion. And then, there's the widow of Nain right there in Luke 7. She's got a dead son. Jesus touches - that's unclean. And then you think: John the Baptist. He sent two of his disciples to go and say "Jesus, are you the one? Or should we be looking for another?" And He said, "You go tell him..." And one of the things He said is lepers - you remember the leper? Lepers are cleansed. He touched the lepers. A woman of the city - a sinner - there in Luke 7:37. The defilement of a prostitute. Jesus gave Himself to the defiled. I know it, brethren, there's something in us that we want to stay clean.

We have a sister in our church - she's married now, but back when she was single, we have a women's Grace House in the East side of our city. We take care of these ladies. She was living over there or helping over there - I forget which, but she really would reach out to these children. This is a bad part of town. And these kids were often dirty and smelled horrible. And

she'd pull up and they'd be so excited because she poured out love to these kids. And they would come running and they would jump in her car when she opened the door and jump in her lap. And they're like wearing clothes that haven't been washed in - who knows? Forever. Covered with all sorts of grime and nastiness. And she just is all over them. What a picture of Christlikeness! (incomplete thought)

Don't be weird. I mean, when it comes to evangelism, yes, Christians are different, but don't be weird. We need to get out into the world. And just remember this. Sometimes when we get a person, we feel like we've got to take them from A to Z. Preach Genesis to Revelation. You don't have to do that. I remember Richard Bennett - converted Catholic priest. He's written a book on converted priests and converted nuns. None of them were ever saved hearing one message or one Gospel presentation. In fact, I've heard the same with regards to Muslims. Muslims are not converted in one message or one encounter. Typically, on average, it's months or years of being exposed to the truth. We recognize this: we are one piece in the machinery of God. You don't have to say everything. And I would say this: Never say more than what people want to hear. You remember? Shake the dust off your feet. You remember texts like that? Or don't throw your pearls before swine. Listen, if people want to hear, you recognize Paul said, you don't count yourself worthy of this. You remember? I think that's Acts 14? Not worthy. You know if people want to argue, people want to scoff. There's a place to shake the dust off. You know if you're talking to somebody and it's obvious that they're not interested, you can just say, apparently you have some things that are more important right now and you can go. I mean, look, what we're bringing is the treasure of all treasures, and if people aren't interested, you don't need to keep going. You don't need to go on and on. Sometimes we have this idea that when people are rejecting, well, if we could just say more, at some point they're going to be receptive. You know what you typically find? Is the people that are receptive, they're people that God has been working on already. Now, they may be antagonistic. It may be something that's touching them at very sensitive points. You need to be discerning, but if people just aren't interested, you don't need to keep going on and on and on.

I would say this: Scrap the friendship evangelism approach. Some people are all about that. Look, it's great to evangelize your friends, but that is not the only approach. When Jesus found the woman at the well, that wasn't an old friend. He didn't say, well, I better camp out here for months on end to befriend this lady before I bring the Gospel to her. That's not necessary.

And just one last thought here. Disciple the lost. That's what the Great Commission is. We are to make disciples. I would say this: disciple the lost. We've got to get away from that one, radical decision mindset of evangelism. That's not what Jesus said. He didn't say go out and speak the Gospel and hope to get these immediate decisions where somebody falls down on their knees and says the sinner's prayer. He said make disciples. If you're going to disciple the lost, that means that what you're doing is you're teaching. You're seeking to persuade them - just like Paul, just like Jesus did to the rich, young ruler. What did He do? Did He say, fall down on your knees and say this little prayer? He didn't. He's looking at his life. He's talking to him about the law and what's good. And He says, "Follow Me." That's what being a disciple is. Follow Me. And if you want to follow Me, here's the path to that. You go sell all that you have. You pour into these people. You're pointing them to following Christ. That's always the issue. Follow Christ. Trust Him. Call upon Him. Call upon Him. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins.

Find what He says in the Word and ask Him to give you the strength to do it. Look to Him and trust Him and follow Him. This is what He says. You've got sin? Yes, you've got sin. You confess it to Him. Take it to Him. Take all your weakness. Take all your doubts. Take your fears. Take your hatred. You hate Him? Some people like Martin Luther, he said he hated God. You take all that to Him. You confess it to Him. You send them to the Lord. Send them to the Lord. Send them to the Lord. If they've got questions, you send them to the Lord. If they've got doubts, you send them to the Lord. Ask the Lord. Ask the Lord to show you the truth. Go into the book of John and read. But discipling them - you're wanting to pour in. It's not just: here's Jesus. He died on the cross for you. Is this wonderful news? Would you like to say this prayer? We've got to get away from this one-time decisional thing. And even though we've got examples in our church of these really radical one-time "bang! people are saved" kind of experiences, with a lot of people, that's not the way it is. A lot of people will say it's not like the light switch just got turned on. It's more like the dawning of the day. Just kind of: the sun came up on them. So recognize, most people you deal with are going to be like that. We want to be lights in the world. That's what Jesus said we are. And you're not being a light if you take that bushel basket and you cover yourself up. The greatest light you have - it's not like beams from you, like that lighthouse. The light that beams from you is the light that comes out of this book into your mind and out through your life and your mouth. That is how the light is projected by you. You've got to be speaking. You've got to be demonstrating. You've got to be acting. Well, amen.