

## 5. Sequential Evangelism and Witnessing (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** Matt. 25:35-40, 1 Cor. 3:1-3, 1 Pet. 2:2, John 6:54-66, Luke 8:4-15.

### Quotes

- No refinements of technique can make up for any failure to recognize that the Word of God itself is the true method of evangelism. *Arthur Skevington Wood*
- We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God. *John Stott*
- Our business is to present the Christian faith clothed in modern terms, not to propagate modern thought clothed in Christian terms. Confusion here is fatal. *J. I. Packer*
- Evangelism is not salesmanship. It is not urging people, pressing them, coercing them, overwhelming them, or subduing them. Evangelism is telling a message. Evangelism is reporting good news. *Richard C. Halverson*
- Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can. *John Wesley*

### Questions

What are the dangers of programming evangelism? What are the dangers of not doing so? How can we stay true to Christ's methods and still try and reach a wider audience? What are the dangers in giving the "full message" all at once? What do we learn from the example of the early Christians and their witnessing?

### Bible summary

In Matt. 25:35-40 Jesus speaks of a very practical form of evangelism—of doing things to help people in need. How does this relate to "sequential evangelism"? Writing to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1-3), Paul says they were not ready for solid food so he had to give them milk. What did he mean? 1 Pet. 2:2 also speaks of giving milk to newborn babies in the faith. Jesus in John 6:54-66 speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Again we need to ask what he meant, because this statement is so readily misunderstood. Even the disciples told Jesus that it was a hard saying! In Luke 8:4-15 Jesus tells the story of the sower, and the seed that fell on different kinds of ground. How does this relate to sequential evangelism? More importantly what does this say about the various responses to the gospel message?

### Comment

"A new Seventh-day Adventist was so excited about the truth he had learned that he wanted to tell everyone. Often, the first thing he wanted to share with others was all about 'the mark of the beast.' However well-meaning, he was a prime example of how truth needs to be presented in a sequential manner." Monday's lesson.

The idea that truth needs to be presented in a logical, progressive manner is not surprising. However the problem with some "sequential programming" is that we can get locked into some kind of pre-programmed strategy and fail to see the individuals involved and their specific needs. Churches at times have developed particular slogans

and accompanying strategies that have not worked. It surely is important to recognize where evangelistic plans have failed and why.

We are rightly referred to Scriptural passages that include references to feeding with milk before solid food. We all understand the need to provide food appropriate to the different stages of growth. How to achieve a good balanced “evangelistic” diet is not one that is easily answered, however. Jesus never used a “programmed” technique. In his conversations with those he witnessed to he always treated them as individuals and dealt with their unique situations. Our problem in today’s media world is that we need to “broadcast”—and the very term includes the word “broad.” In other words we do not tailor our message to individuals and yet still wish to try and reach them through mass media. While it is surely useful to convey ideas and information in this way, we cannot rely on any methods that do not follow the way that Jesus shared the good news of God.

What is the good news we have to share? In the words of Jesus: “I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.” So what happened? Between that simple announcement of truth by the Church’s Founder a couple of millennia ago, and now?

When was the last time I really helped someone to a more abundant life in Jesus? That’s the Question that really bugs us all. Because it gets under the skin of our comfortableness, invades our comfort zone, and makes us face the reality of this world and what God wants to do through us.

Lines like: You go into all the world, and make disciples. If you have seen me you have seen the Father. I am come to seek and to save that which was lost. Turn the other cheek. Give your coat, and your shirt too. Give your money to the poor.

These are invitations to service in the fellowship of friendship: for Jesus calls us no longer servants but friends. We are to be friends in the spreading of his good news gospel, good news that is the *god-spel*, the old Anglo-Saxon term that originally meant the *God story*.

Too much and too often the story is about us. And we don’t tell the right story. It’s time to give up on ourselves, and give back to God. Give back what we value the most—all the world-foolishness that has invaded our lives and exchange it for the treasure that doesn’t rust or rot. For all our techniques and programs, we need to come back to the truth about God as it is in Jesus.

### **Ellen White Comments**

Let there be the wisest planning for the success of the work... The work that the gospel embraces as missionary work is a straightforward, substantial work which will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.--Letter 215b, 1899. {Ev 19-20}

Sometimes various ways and purposes, different modes of operation in connection with the work of God, are about evenly balanced in the mind; but it is at this very point that the nicest discrimination is necessary. And if anything is accomplished to the purpose it must be done at the golden moment. The slightest inclination of the weight in the balance should be seen and should determine the matter at once. Long delays tire the angels. It is even more excusable to make a wrong decision sometimes than to be continually in a wavering position, to be hesitating, sometimes inclined in one direction, then in another. More perplexity and wretchedness result from thus hesitating and doubting than from sometimes moving too hastily. {3T 497}

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