

## 6. Personal Evangelism and Witnessing (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

**Biblical material:** Acts 4:13, 14; John 1:37-50; Psalm 139; 1 Pet. 3:1-15; John 4:37, 38, Isaiah 43:10.

### Quotes

- Anyone who witnesses to the grace of God revealed in Christ is undertaking a direct assault against Satan's dominion. *Thomas Cosmades*
- *Testimony* is not a synonym for *autobiography*! When we are truly witnessing, we are not talking about ourselves but about Christ. *John R. W. Stott*
- When our Lord sends us out to witness for him, he does not send us out against a wall. Rather, he gives us an open door for personal evangelism, an open door that no man can shut. *Josip Horak*
- The sermons most needed today are sermons in shoes. *C.H. Spurgeon*
- What I live by, I impart. *Augustine*
- We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine. *Dwight L. Moody*

### Questions

Is true evangelism ever really anything but personal? What are the New Testament models for evangelism? Can witnessing be done by “remote control”? What is the real motivation for personal evangelism? Can seminars/programs develop personal evangelism, and in what way? What does our personal evangelism say about God?

### Bible summary

“They took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13 NIV). This was, is, and always will be the basis for true personal evangelism. Without the personal experience of Jesus, we have nothing to say to anyone else. But with that personal experience, we can truly be one of his witnesses. John 1:37-50 records Jesus' calling of the disciples to show the very personal nature of the call, and the response. Without being called, and without responding, these men would never have been disciples, and they could not have witnessed for him. Psalm 139 has much to say about who we are, how we are made, and the extent to which God knows us. Realizing this we should be happy that despite all that God sees and knows, he still calls us to be his witnesses, sharing our personal testimony with all who will listen. Instead of getting sidetracked by the wives/husbands issues of 1 Peter 3:1-15, read it as an endorsement of God's interest in everyone sharing their faith. As verse 15 (NIV) concludes, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” In John 4:37, 38 Jesus reminds his disciples that evangelism is a mutual exercise, and that “one sows, another reaps.” God makes it clear that we are his witnesses. Isaiah 43:10

### Comment

To have a deep, personal and intimate relationship with you is what God is interested in! That way he can heal and save you, and prepare you for his eternal kingdom. He's certainly not interested in bargaining with people or making some kind of transaction.

Nor does he want people to believe their salvation depends on working for credit! Some people seem to think that they can make it to heaven without even *liking* God.

Again and again, when God comes to human beings, he wants a relationship based on love and acceptance. *He doesn't want fear!* That's why he says, "Don't be afraid!"

There is no other meaning to the truth: "God is love" than that God wants a relationship based on loving, accepting trust that works both ways. That was the reason Jesus came: to show, to demonstrate, prove that God truly is love--and he even let us crucify him to answer the charges that he was selfish and unloving.

Jesus told the story of the sower who spread seed as a way of showing how people respond differently to God and his desire for a relationship with Him. Some hear and yet don't allow God to change them. They just have no depth, and when the heat comes, they dry up. Others get choked out by the distractions of other relationships, other ways of living. Some don't want any relationship at all, and get eaten up by the birds! A lasting relationship only comes from having deep roots in the soil of God's friendship, growing in Him and loving Him and His caring commands.

I remember talking with a woman about her experience. She had tried *so hard*. Doing everything her church leaders told her she had to do. Making sure that her behavior was faultless. As if she were trying to impress God, just as we try to impress those around us. The result? It made her life miserable, and she ended up hating God. Sad, tragically sad. Because even in human relationships, the ones that last, the ones that are meaningful, are not based on trying to impress. Only by being who you really are can you hope to have a deep and enduring relationship.

The same with God. He loves us just as we are. Not that he loves all the mess of sin that we have got into, but he still sees what we can be. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). He came here to this earth for that very purpose: to show us what he was really like (John 14:9), and to win us back to love him and to trust him. What God most wants is that love relationship based on mutual trust, and the Cross shows the ultimate trustworthiness of God.

Said Jesus, "If I be lifted up...I will draw *all* to me." (John 12:32). The drawing power of God is His character that wants to love all of his unlovable, rebellious children. He offers friendship, and saving, healing love. Our role? To let others know what Jesus has done for us!

### **Ellen White Comments**

In His life Jesus of Nazareth differed from all other men. . . . He is the only true model of goodness and perfection. From the beginning of His ministry men began more clearly to comprehend the character of God. . . . Christ's mission on earth was to reveal to men that God was not a despot, but a heavenly Father, full of love and mercy for His children. He spoke of God by the endearing title of "My Father." . . . {HP 14}

The work of the good Samaritan represents Christ's mission to the world. Our Saviour came to reveal the character of God, to represent his love for man. He acted just as the Father would have done in all emergencies. {HM, October 1, 1897}

Christ revealed to the world the character of God as full of mercy, compassion and inexpressible love. He came to lift up man. It was provided that whosoever should believe in Christ as his personal Saviour should be saved. In all his works he taught men that it was his mission not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. {ST, July 2, 1896}

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