

8. Equipping for Evangelism and Witnessing (2Q 2012—Evangelism and Witnessing)

Biblical material: Matt. 4:19, 11:1-11, 10:1-14, 1 Pet. 5:8, 2 Pet. 3:9.

Quotes

- The incarnation is the pattern for all evangelism. Jesus Christ was totally in the world yet wholly uncontaminated by it. *Everett L. Cattell*
- There is but one question of the hour: how to bring the truth of God’s Word into vital contact with the minds and hearts of all classes of people. *William E. Gladstone*
- A witness in a court of law has to *give* evidence; a Christian witness has to *be* evidence. It is the difference between law and grace! *Geoffrey R. King*
- The Christian’s task is to make the Lord Jesus visible, intelligible, and desirable. *Len Jones*
- If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? *David Otis Fuller*
- A Christian is called to be a witness, not counsel for the prosecution. *Doug Barnett*
- Evangelism is not an option for the Christian life. *Luis Palau*
- We should not ask, “What is wrong with the world?” for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, “What has happened to the salt and light?” *John Stott*

Questions

What are the essential qualifications for evangelism and witnessing? What training do we need? How did Jesus train his disciples? How can we make sure that the training we do in church is authentic? Can you be a witness if you have not “seen”? How do we make sure we are demonstrating answers in the wider issues of the cosmic conflict?

Bible summary

Jesus tells Peter and Andrew that he will make them “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). What did he mean? When John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask if he was the One, or whether they should wait for another, Jesus told them to simply report what they had seen: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” (Matt. 11:5 NIV). When Jesus sent out his disciples two by two he gave them instructions—mainly practical ones for the journey (10:1-14). They were to travel light and take no money, relying on the help of others. How would we apply these instructions today? 1 Pet. 5:8 tells us to be self-controlled and alert; 2 Pet. 3:9 reminds us of God’s promises and patience.

Comment

Jesus certainly spent time teaching his disciples the truths of the kingdom. However, we do not have any real evidence that he gave instruction regarding

evangelistic techniques. His command was to go and share what they had seen. In this way we are truly his witnesses. The danger is that we adopt marketing techniques from the world and try to apply this to spreading the gospel. We need to remind ourselves that we are not “selling product” or “advertising services.” In so many ways we need to be very different in the way we present the good news. We are not representatives of some company or business, we are not leading a PR or marketing team.

So when it comes to training we need to make sure we are not following teaching methods adapted from the business world: “gaining a decision” being equivalent to “making a sale,” for example. The training we need is at the feet of Jesus, who never adopted the ways of the world to spread his message of salvation.

So what “equipping” do we need? It is surely found in the pages of the Bible, not in some sales manual! We need to be able to present Jesus.

What was that about having a message to give to the world? What were we meant to be saying? Have we become like actors who’ve forgotten their lines? What is the gospel? We can all mouth the words about telling others about Jesus, even quote texts like “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

But if we don’t mean it, if it doesn’t change us, if our lives don’t show God, we haven’t got the gospel and the truth is not in us. We are tongue-tied with nothing to say. All the other versions of the gospel are frauds because they replace the essential truth with something different. The gospel is about a person—a God who loves you, and the one you love in return, and who wants to love all his misguided, floundering children. It’s about this God who continues to care, who is answering the charges brought against him through demonstration, who desperately wants to end this time of sin and suffering and to take us home to be with him forever. This is the God who answers our questions, ends our fears, and is our salvation.

The good news is not to be equated to healthy living or a caring community or anything else, however laudable. It’s not about the church. It’s not about ourselves. It’s about God. We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. That’s our motto and our motivation.

Ellen White Comments

In the training for service in the cause of God, the Bible must lie at the foundation. The principles of truth taught in the Word of God will act as a safeguard against the evil influences that are in the world {RH, July 25, 1907}

In our institutions the spirit of Christ was to be a witness to the world of the character of God, a living epistle, known and read of all men. . . . {PH149 20}

We must not have a sensational religion, which has no root in truth. Solid instruction must be given to the people upon the reasons of our faith. They must be educated to a far greater extent than they have been in the doctrines of the Bible, and especially in the practical lessons that Jesus gave to His disciples. The believers must be impressed with their great need of Bible knowledge. There must be painstaking effort to fasten in the minds of all, the solid arguments of the truth; for everyone will be tested, and those who are rooted and grounded in the work of God will be unmoved by the heresies that will arise on all sides; but if any neglect to obtain the necessary preparation, they will be swept away by errors that have the appearance of truth. {Ev 364.4}

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