

9. Developing a Winning Attitude (3Q 2020—Making Friends for God)

Biblical Material: John 4:27–30, 39–42; Matt. 15:21–28; 2 Thess. 1:1–4; Rom. 15:7; Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 3:15.

Quotes

- Our task is not to whitewash nor bloat the truth. Our task is to tell the truth. Period. *Max Lucado*
- What is the first hypothesis for evangelism? That God is there, and is the kind of God the Bible says he is, and that he has not been silent but has given us propositional truth. *Francis Schaeffer*
- Evangelism’s highest and ultimate end is not the welfare of men, not even their eternal bliss, but the glorification of God. *R.B. Kuiper*
- Whatever we do, we must not treat the Great Commission like it’s the Great Suggestion. *Charles R. Swindoll*
- [Jesus] plan called for action, and how He expressed it predicted its success. He didn’t say “you **might** be my witnesses,” or “you **could** be my witnesses,” or even “you **should** be my witnesses.” He said “you **will** be my witnesses.” *Charles R. Swindoll*
- The believer’s job is to shine out Christ in their living and in their speaking. *Henry Hon*

Questions

How can we misrepresent the truth by our attitude? What really “wins” people? In what ways can evangelistic efforts be counterproductive? What is our real motivation—care for others and their eternal destiny, or numbers in our church? Did Jesus seek to have those he spoke to become members of a specific organization? How are we to best present what we believe?

Bible summary

John 4:27–30, 39–42 is the end of the story of the woman at the well. The faith of the Canaanite woman is validated by Jesus in Matt. 15:21–28. Paul boasts about the Thessalonians attitude (2 Thess. 1:1–4). “So accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, and give God the glory.” Rom. 15:7 FBV. “Be kind and compassionate to each other, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Eph. 4:32 FBV. We are to be ready to answer those who ask us the reason for the hope we have (1 Pet. 3:15).

Comment

At the heart of this study is the kind of people we should be. It may very well happen that though we may “have the truth,” we don’t convey it in an attractive way. As someone once said, “You may well be right, but do you have to be so obnoxious about it!”

“You cannot antagonize and persuade at the same time.” This thought should often be in our minds as we speak with others. All too often the objective is to win the argument rather than win the person. In our early days as a faith community the comment by those who observed us was that “Nobody can win an argument better than an Adventist.” This was because we often chose to engage in an open debate on subjects like the Sabbath and the state of the dead. We may well have been right, and having something discussed publicly may have been a good idea, but perhaps the desire to “win” took precedence over a gracious presentation of the gospel...

Evangelism is a word that provokes many responses. Sometimes it has become programmatic, occasionally deceptive, frequently abused. But at its heart it is simply telling the truth you have discovered about God, and his salvation. Sadly our evangelism has often ended up speaking more about us...

The focus must always be on God. "We do not preach ourselves," (2 Cor. 4:5), for the message is all about God and his gracious character revealed before the on-looking universe. The failure to remember this has led to many problems. For example, what is proselytism and what is evangelism? Evangelism is generally used in a positive sense by those who believe in sharing their faith. On the other hand proselytism is the term used to condemn evangelism you don't like!

In fact the hot topic of conversation on the world religious scene is proselytism, usually defined as religious people using unfair means to try and convert others.. Some countries have banned proselytism. People are not allowed to change their religion, while those who try to convert others face jail.

So what are we to do? If others decide to label evangelism as unacceptable proselytism, is it enough to cry and protest? Or should it make us think—not just about our own methodologies, but on how our actions are viewed, even if they are frequently mistaken. It's true that at times some will deliberately misunderstand. But in such situations, should we not sit down with those of different faith communities and seek better understanding? No, we are not about to give up evangelism. We are called to share the good news of God with all people everywhere. But if we can avoid needless offence and explain our best of intentions in an open way, should we not take every opportunity to do so?

How should the principles of Jesus inform our understanding of evangelism and witnessing? That surely should be our highest goal—to understand the way Jesus shared the truth of God, and to follow his lead.

Ellen White comments

But a faithful performance of duty goes hand in hand with a right estimate of the character of God. There is earnest work to do for the Master. Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor, and He sent His disciples forth to do the same work He came to do. So He sends forth His workers today. {HP 131 }

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed. {ST, January 20, 1890 }

Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and results of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 12 }

Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power... Daily they are improving the opportunities for service that lie within their reach. Daily they are witnessing for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home, or in a public field of usefulness. {AA 55.3 }