

EVANGELISM 101

On Feb 24 of 2102 a guy called Adrain Vásquez had been asked to go fishing with a couple of friends. The three Panamanian men were on their way home after the night of fishing, happy with their success, when the motor on their small open boat died leaving them adrift, far from land, and out of range of any cell phone signal. For 16 days they drifted at sea, getting further and further from land until they finally saw a ship. As the luxury cruise ship named the Star Princess approached Vásquez and his two friends began waving their orange life jackets to attract attention.

Several passengers on the Star Princess saw the small boat. One person even took a picture of the boat in distress. Even though they reported to the crew the boat was in danger, the Star Princess did not stop. It simply passed by. Weeks later Vásquez was picked up near death by a fishing boat near the Galapagos islands, more than 600 miles away. His two friends were dead.

Becky Pippert Molenhouse says, “Christians and non-Christians have something in common. We’re both uptight about evangelism. Christians are afraid of offending while non-Christians are afraid of being assaulted.”

Today we are starting a new series called Let It Shine. We want to encourage everyone to be active in sharing their faith and telling their friends about Jesus. Today we start with Evangelism 101.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven He said this to his disciples;

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus said "...you shall be my witnesses" and that is true. Good or bad, as followers of Jesus we all bear witness to Jesus. A witness is someone who simply tells what they have seen and heard. They share their personal experience.

Jesus said that we should be His witnesses in 4 places. I believe He was not simply saying what WOULD happen but what SHOULD happen. These 4 places represent 4 different circles of influence. He said we would be His witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." These 4 places represent the 4 circles of influence each one of us is called to. They move from easy to reach to hard to reach.

Jerusalem represents people who are culturally similar and geographically close to you. This represents the people around you that you already know or have a relationship with or that you have things in common with. They are the people you will spend time with in the coming week. Family members. People you work with.

I am a 50 year old Irish Canadian. I love electronics and fishing. I like going into stores like Best Buy, but my favorite store is Bass Pro Shop. I love that place. I could spend the day hanging out there. Anybody else here like fishing and like that store? My People! One of the things I realized is that, if I bump into someone in the Bass Pro Shop, odds are I am going to like that person and can easily get into a conversation with them. Especially if that person is another 50 year old Irish Canadian – we might as well be brothers. It is because we share so much in common.

Judea represents people who are culturally similar but more geographically distant to you. When the Apostle Paul would travel to a new city he would always go to the synagogue first. Why? Were the Jews more important than the Gentiles? Not at all. Paul simply knew that, since he was a Jew, it was easier to reach the Jews first. He started with the easiest to reach and then moved on to the harder to reach. E.g. hanging out with the Canadians on the Doulos.

Samaria represents people who are culturally different but geographically close to you. There are a lot of people in Brampton who are in this category. They may live across the road from this person but it is difficult to get to know them because they are so culturally different than you. It is more difficult because you have to be able to enter into their world and understand their religion and culture before you can really share Christ. E.g. Brampton Challenge

The ends of the earth means just that, people who are culturally different and geographically distant to you. This is the hardest form of telling others about Jesus because it means that you not only have to learn about another person's culture but you have to leave your home and move and adapt to that different culture. We heard about that this morning with Ryan and Heather DeWeerd and their ministry in the DR. I am sure moving there was difficult. When we went to live in Kuwait it was difficult. Just learning to do basic things like learn the language, buy groceries or get a driver's license was very difficult. It took us years to adapt to the new climate and culture. Everything was difficult at first but eventually it became easier as we adapted.

There are people here this morning and God may be telling you to become an overseas missionary. That is great. However, all of us are told to start where we are. That is what I want to talk about today. Just that we are to start in Jerusalem. If my Jerusalem is 50 year old Irish Canadians in Bass Pro Shop, what is yours? All of us live in the community. We have relationships with people around us. The place to start is with the people you already know and have something in common with.

Wouldn't it be amazing if everyone here this morning reached out to their Jerusalem, to the people that you already have something in common with? Look at the diversity in this room. Brampton is a diverse city with people from all around the world. If we are going to reach this city we need to leverage the diversity we have as a church.

This is why we are wanting to start a Filipino service this fall. The best way to reach out to the many thousands of Filipinos in Brampton is with the Filipinos that already attend this church. Why? Because that is their Jerusalem. People have asked "How come the Filipinos are getting a service?". I would love to see us as a church begin to leverage our diversity towards other groups in Brampton. It would be great to have a Jamaican outreach and Indian outreach as well.

Remember when the disciples first met Jesus after He had been baptized?

John 1:38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 Come, he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. 40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus...

When Andrew shows an interest in learning more about Jesus the invitation is given to “come and see”. Andrew does not make the mistake that most of us do. Often when it comes to our family, we wait, we procrastinate, we worry about how they’ll respond.

You don’t have to be an expert. You don’t need a degree in theology. A new Christian once asked Dwight Moody, “How long does a person have to be a Christian before he can start telling other people about Jesus?” Moody said, “How long does a candle have to burn before it starts lighting up the room?” The answer of course is IMMEDIATELY.

If you leave a battery-powered tool on the charger all the time but you never use it pretty soon the battery wears out ... not from over-use, but from lack of use.

Where is your Jerusalem? Who are the people that you already have a relationship with or have something in common with? After Andrew tells Peter, the next day

John 1:43-46 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote -- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nazareth! Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip.

There is that phrase again, “Come and see.” No guilt trips... no pressure. Come and see Jesus for yourself! So how do we invite people to come and see Jesus?

1. Through consistent EXAMPLE

Example is essential. If you lead a life of worry, promiscuity, or anger, chances are your example will be a barrier to your family accepting the gospel. Why would they want what you claim to have?

There’s a passage in the New Testament that speaks of reaching your family. Peter writes with some helpful advice specifically given to wives who are married to a husband who isn’t a believer.

1 Peter 3:1-4 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

We could summarize that passage by saying, “Wives, share the gospel by how you live more so than by what you say.”

Your everyday example attracts people to Christ, but hypocrisy turns them away. You have to practice what you preach. There needs to be consistency in your life. You need to be the same person regardless of who you are with.

2. Through genuine EXCITEMENT

Did you notice the people in that video this morning. They were excited. Are you?

Once Andrew had met Jesus he couldn't wait to go tell his brother, Peter. It says that the "first thing Andrew did" was to share the news. He was excited. When people are excited they want to share what it is they are excited about.

If we're not careful, our relationship with Jesus becomes some decision that was made in your past but the excitement has long since worn off. And pretty soon the gospel message – the old, old story – becomes just that, the old, old story. And so you don't share it within your closest circle of influence.

It could be that the greatest hindrance to evangelism today is the poverty of our own experience. --
Billy Graham

We try and justify our apathy. We try to be politically correct and say, "Well, I'm not going to force my beliefs on someone else." Or "My family knows where I stand and if they are interested they know where to find me." Because Andrew is excited he acts immediately. Sometimes we say, "tomorrow," or "at Thanksgiving," or "next year on the family trip—*that's when* I'll share the difference Christ has made in my life." But my experience has been that the longer I wait, the less apt I am to share the gospel with someone else.

You can not lead someone to a spiritual place where you have never been. And, if your faith is real, there will be a personal excitement that comes through—whether it is a quiet intensity or an overflow of effervescence.

Momentum is a powerful thing. Excitement is contagious. I don't know about you, but I am excited about what is happening in this church. We are growing. People are being saved. I love Bass Pro Shop, but I love coming to church even more. When you are excited about something it is easy to share it. E.g Brownsville – showing up hours before (worse than a seniors luncheon)

3. Through creative EFFORTS

When people have the will to speak of their Lord they will find no shortage of ways in which to do it --
Michael Green

Recently we as a church started a cricket team. Why did we do that, because we love cricket? No, because we want to reach out to people who love cricket. That is a creative way to reach out. We showed the final game of the World Cup in the church to reach out to the community. There are many ways to do it.

The creative video we showed this morning had rap music in it. I am sure that there was someone here this morning who was thinking "Why are we showing a video with rap music in it. I don't like that kind of music." I don't care for it much either, but there are people who do. I don't like playing cricket but I think it is great there are people who do and creatively use that to reach others.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."

Salt adds some pizzazz to what is bland and common. Jesus expects you to do the same within your circles of influence. Your creativity is an expression that Christ is real in your life. We are all called to use our God given creativity to peak someone's curiosity on spiritual matters.

In the New Testament you may remember what happened with a tax collector named Matthew (Greek) or Levi (Hebrew) who becomes a disciple. When he leaves his dishonest ways and follows Christ, he can't keep the news to himself. So Matthew employs some creative ways in bringing those closest to him closer to Jesus.

Luke 5:29: "Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them." Matthew used a highly creative means to get his friends together. It's called FOOD! He invited his lost friends to get together so they would have a chance to meet Jesus as well.

The ALS ice bucket challenge – a creative way to get people thinking about something they probably were not thinking about before.

4. Through sincere EXPLANATION

In the first point I said it is important to "share the gospel by how you live more so than by what you say" but this does not mean that what you say is not important. Sharing the truth is essential. We can make small talk. Our lifestyle opens the door for us to speak, but what we say is equally important.

We can invite People to a church program. We can even share about our personal faith but at some point we need to make sure they understand what the Gospel is all about. Sometimes asking people to respond immediately elicits feelings of uneasiness, awkwardness, and fear. It can be so difficult to start a conversation. There are people that say "I'll just wait and do nice things and when someone asks me about my faith I will tell them." This often does not work.

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect

Always be ready to give an answer to the question "Why are you a Christian." How about you? If someone asked you that right now would you be ready to give an answer? Think through your family and close friends. Are you prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in you? In other words, are you ready to tell your *good* friends about how they can meet your *best* friend?

Yonge St. Mission and the Tim Hortons dounuts. We used it to share the love of Jesus – and Jesus is much better than a Tim Hortons dounut!