

EVANGELISM

I. MESSAGE

>> We are "heralds" of a message, sent above all to announce the good news & witness about its effect on our lives.

A. Remember 3 misconceptions: works; impersonal ritual; imposed change

1. Share the gospel as antitheses to these misconceptions. This provides both better definition of the gospel & corrects serious misconceptions.
2. Get this out at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Get out before defending Xianity; otherwise, you are defending what you don't want to defend!
 - a) Though it is not always appropriate to share this immediately, we should realize that we have not really witnessed until this is communicated.
3. Express this by what you have discovered, instead of making declarative statements &/or directly negating what the other person has said.
4. Express this through:
 - a) with verses: show the relevant passages both to back up what you're saying & because of the power of the word to convict
 - b) illustration: learn simple, vivid stories which help to explain the meaning of biblical concepts (Pharisee & Publican; tightrope & wheel-barrow; the room; the party before the execution; etc)

B. Remember the power of this message (Rom 1:16; 10:17; I Cor 2:2,4; Col 1:5,6; I Thes 1:5; 2:13)

- a) Believe that it will have impact regardless of their visible response.
- b) Try to center around it for the same reason (I Cor 2:3) & because people often don't understand it initially (II Cor 4:4 >> Acts 2:40).

C. Be able to share how you came to Christ (3 things) & show verses on how they can (Rev 3:20; Jn 1:12).

II. SENDER

A. The effective sender depends upon God in witnessing. He realizes that this task is humanly impossible & requires God's empowerment. He also knows God's promises in this area & counts on them instead of his feelings or circumstances.

1. Prayer - many are not effective in evangelism simply because they do not pray or pray effectively

a) Before: for open doors & the eyes to see them (Col 4:3)

b) During: for the boldness & wisdom to speak as is appropriate in that situation (Col 4:4; Eph 6:19)

c) After: that the message would make lasting impact on the person

d) Against the devil: that we may not be thwarted in our efforts to expose the person to the gospel (I Thes 2:17,18 in principle); that he may not blind the mind of the person to the message of the gospel (II Cor 4:4); that the gospel would not be stolen from his conscious memory (Mk 4:15)

2. Trusts in the power of the message ("message")

B. Knowing the role of human agency, the effective sender never dichotomizes God's role from his role. Depending upon God to play His role, he is willing to take a step of faith to open his mouth!

1. Col 4:5 - "making the most of the opportunity" is a market word; STOCK BROKER: "The question is never if there is money to be made - there is always money to be made. It is only a question of seeing those opportunities & taking advantage of them." Paul has the same attitude. Since we have prayed for open doors, there are opportunities. It is only a question of seeing them & responding appropriately. (Paul in chains >> a "captive audience" Phil 1:12-14)

a) Don't assume that the nonXian does not want to hear or would not be interested in the gospel. This will also negative affect your witness, &/or cause you not to witness at all. Instead of assuming that he is not open/interested until you see evidence that he is, you should assume that he is open/interested until you see evidence that he is not.

2. Realize that "making the most of the opportunity means different things in different situations. Sometimes it means a direct witness. Sometimes it means not doing that, but instead doing an act of love or getting to know the person. Sometimes it means simply relating your own involvement with JC in the context of sharing about your life. Sometimes it means correcting a misconception about Xianity. Sometimes it means just having a good time. What it means in any given situation you must determine by other principles (see "medium" & "receiver"), by prayer & by your own experience in witnessing. The question is: are you "making the most of the opportunity", are you seeing witness as a lifestyle - or are you not? If all believers viewed evangelism in this way, the world would soon be converted!

C. Col 4:6 - The effective sender projects genuine warmth, love & interest in his conversation with non-Xians.

1. Fundies interpret this verse to mean avoiding profanity. But that interpretation shows their uptightness & condemning attitude, which is the very thing the verse is saying not to project! To be gracious means to project God's attitude toward people: namely, that He loves & accepts them just as they are.
2. A nonXian should always enjoy his conversation with you. He should leave it ready & desirous to talk with you again ("seasoned with salt").
3. Remember: "The most interesting person is the most interested person." Learn to take a real interest in the other person, to be content to ask about them & follow their answers with additional questions. Be able to genuinely enjoy discovering a unique individual & giving them love in this way.

D. Col 4:6b - The effective sender is able to read the response of the other person & respond accordingly. (GETTING SLAPPED ON A DATE)

1. If they show interest, give them more. If they show disinterest or opposition, give them less. (See Aldrich's chart for an example of this principle)
2. Avoid predictability (if you sense that they are expecting something, don't do what they expect).
3. Know your own temperamental tendency & adjust for it. Some are aggressive & tend to push impatiently. They need to hold back. Others are passive & tend to stay silent. They need to step out.

E. I Pet 3:15 - The effective sender knows some basic apologetics for 2 reasons:

1. For his own confidence in the truthfulness of the message. This is the primary purpose of apologetics - to confirm the believer in his faith. Unless we are sure that what we are declaring is objectively true, we will either not declare it, declare it only when we "feel" it is true, or our witnessing will be eroded by this lack of confidence.
2. For the receiver, apologetics destroys one formidable misconception/rationalization: that there is no evidence for Xianity & that therefore only those who are ignorant or need a crutch believe.

III. MEDIUM: the context in which the communication takes place

A. Words & Deeds (Message & Lifestyle)

1. Deeds: promote interest in & provide credibility to the message

a) See Matt 5:13-16 (salt that gives taste & inspires thirst; light shows how life should be lived & exposes by positive contrast); Matt 13:19 >> 13:38 (seed is word & sons); I Thes 1:5 (lifestyle that backs up credibility of message); What kind of deeds/lifestyle?

(1) your response to them: acceptance (Col 4:6) - interest in & love for; hospitality (Heb 13:2); willingness to help them in problems

(2) your response to life: problems (Phil 2:14-16 a lifestyle that exposes emptiness of life w/out God; Eph 5:8-11 same as Phil 2); marriage & family; Titus 2:9-14 ("adorning" the gospel)

B. Warm & Cold: show BibSac Chart

1. Warm: longstanding relationship already exists; you already have credibility & they can identify with you. Because of this, you can be much more frank & call on people to act. "BRIDGE": see Jn 1:41-51; Acts 16:30-34; II Tim 1:5 for NT examples of this

a) Always preferable to begin w/ & work through warm relationships. (One reason why new Xians often are most effective witnesses, especially if helped by older Xians)

b) Always preferable to invite to a meeting if possible (see Body below)

2. Cold: no longstanding relationship; less credibility & identification (sometimes, not always) - therefore, must be more careful about calling on the person to come to a meeting, receive Christ, pray Jn 7:17, etc.

a) But remember that some are already informed &/or open before you meet them. But you should see clear evidence of this before you call for action.

b) Some are gifted to do cold witness effectively. (Bill Bright)

c) Best approach is to build to warm medium & witness w/in the warm context

(1) who to select (BibSac chart); the ones who respond relationally are usually being ripened by God

(2) how to do: focus; spend time w/; plant seeds as per last week; read response

C. Body of Christ (Jn 13:34,35; 17:21,23): Body witness enhances verbal witness: as they observe the quality of love relationships between Xians, this draws people & makes them more interested in the message.

1. Whenever appropriate, invite to a meeting. They will hear the gospel in body setting; gifted evangelists may be able to talk to them).
2. If not possible, expose them frequently to your Xian friends through parties, dinners, lunch, other social things.

IV. RECEIVER

- A. Decision Continuum: people make big decisions in stages over a period of time (BUYING A CAR)
1. Stages: No awareness; disinterest; curiosity; active interest; decision
 2. Importance: to try to move people too fast will result in needless rejection or insincere decisions which don't last
 3. Application: discern which stage the person is at, what is needed to be able to go to next stage, what to call for
 - a) Do information from apologetics paper
- B. Remember to look for the perceived needs of the person & show him how Christ meets those needs. Don't just focus on the needs you had (Jn 4). Be especially on the lookout for painful transitions, because these force people past their normal superficiality to think about the big issues of life. These are "windows" of vulnerability for the gospel.
1. Individuals: HS/college; marriage (less so); children; divorce; mid-life; retirement; death in the family/friends; illness
 2. Culture-wide: family (Dobson); recession; 60's counter-cultural movement; 3rd world westernization)
- C. Remember the "noetic effects of sin" (Rom 1:18-21)
1. Though they do not know the gospel, they already know God is there & that they should bow.
 2. Therefore, when you do apologetics, you are only reminding them of what they already know & taking away rationalizations they've built up. When you declare the gospel, you are taking away the biggest excuse not to bow - namely, that they'll be rejected.
 3. Don't expect non-Xians to be consistently rational. Rebellion against God is by definition irrational & therefore all arguments against God's existence & the gospel will be based on a moral problem, not an honest intellectual one.
- D. Remember to witness to those who can afford to say "no" & hit back. Don't just witness to those who are so lonely & insecure that they can't afford to not respond. (Aldrich's Hierarchy of Needs Chart)

V. NOISE: that which inhibits accurate communication

- A. Remember the misconceptions mentioned above: works, religion, Xians are stupid, judgmental, boring, wimpy, etc. Each of these effectively inhibits communication, & each one that is overturned effectively enhances communication of the gospel.
- B. Don't be argumentative. Resist the desire to "win". Instead, remember you are sharing & declaring what God has done for you & said in His word (I Pet 3:15b; Col 4:6a).
1. Avoid getting side-tracked on to peripheral issues. Learn to give concise answers to questions & then get back to the gospel. Learn to listen patiently to the other person while they get on a tangent, but then to draw the conversation back to the gospel. Learn to say "I don't know about that, but I do know about what I have found/ what the Bible says". (Jn 1)
 2. Avoid negating every falsehood. It is not morally necessary nor effective in witnessing to do this (ethical issues, Catholicism, etc.) Don't lie or compromise if they call for your opinion, but it is not usually helpful to raise them yourself. It is much better to say nothing & wait for the opportunity to share positively what you have found.
- C. Don't project shame about the gospel or JC. This cannot be hidden & always negatively affects your witness. Instead, talk freely of your involvement w/ JC & share the gospel with genuine enthusiasm (Rom 1:16).
- a) This makes a powerful impact on other person: you are normal, reasonably intelligent - & into JC!
 - b) If you are ashamed, it is probably because of fear of rejection or because you are unconvinced of its truthfulness or present reality in your life.
- D. Cultural noise: Since all people are part of a culture & since nonXians take their identity from culture, the believer is to try to identify with the culture of the nonXian as much as possible (I Cor 9:19ff). This includes things like dress, music, alcohol, etc. Many well-meaning evangelicals are completely ineffective in witnessing because of this one, easily remedied area. They are simply communicating so much "noise" that the non-Xian can't "hear" the message.
1. If you are willing to go with them to their social things, they will likely be willing to come w/ you.
- E. Avoid "Christianese". Using words like "born again", "sinner", "sanctified", "edified", etc. confuse rather than communicate effectively on a conceptual level (this is why Paul devised his own atonement language for non-Jews). This "lingo" also alienates the nonXian & makes him feel unwelcome in an inner circle. This also goes for the discussion of sophisticated theological issues around nonXians.