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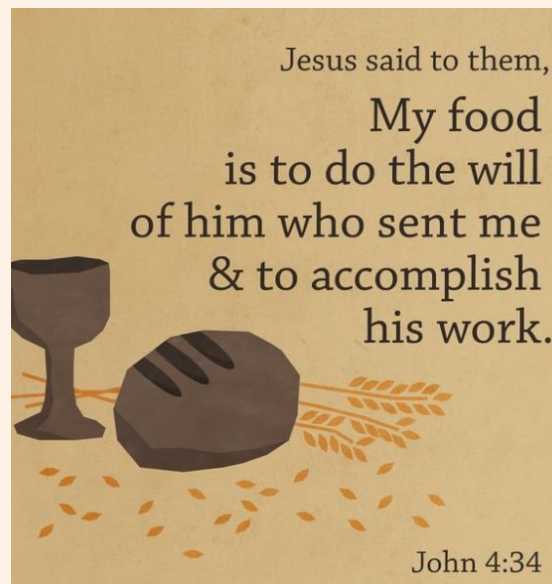
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Personal Evangelism Part 3

“Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’ Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the

fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying “One sows and another reaps” is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.’ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’” John 4:31-42



What do we most want for other people? I guess that kind of depends on who we’re talking about. We might be thinking of someone that we’d like to see raised out of poverty. We might know someone else who we want to have a good education. We might be thinking about someone that we want to have better health.

Let me say those are noble and Christian things to want for other people. But the question is what do “I” most want for other people. And the correct answer is always for them to know the Lord and for them to go to heaven. What I most want for anyone is the salvation of their soul, for them to have the hope of heaven.

We are again in John chapter 4. We have been watching Jesus teach a master class in personal evangelism. Jesus is teaching us to reach out to other people and encourage them and teach them about the Lord. We have six more things to look at. They are not all easy. But each thing that Jesus shows us is something that we can do. Let’s begin.

12. Jesus sacrificed the physical for the spiritual.

The wording is interesting as the disciples come back to where Jesus is. They don't say, "Hey, let's just have a meal." They don't say, "It's lunch time; let's eat." They urge Jesus to eat something. The King James Version uses the word "beseeched." The word actually means to search for something. That sounds odd. But we have probably done this before. We know what we want the answer to the question to be, and so whatever it takes to get to that answer, that's what we're going to do. Whether we ask questions or make statements, we are searching for a specific answer. Mom, McDonald's. Mom, chicken nuggets. Mom, the playground. Now you know what I'm talking about. They urged him. They wanted a yes, it's time to eat. Whatever it takes to get to that answer that's what we're going to do.

In response Jesus gives one of the most famous statements about his mission here on the earth. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me." Maybe your translation says my meat. That word literally means sustenance, that which sustains me is to do the will of my father and to accomplish his work. As Jesus was hanging on the cross, some of his last words were, "It is finished." It is accomplished. Jesus had done all that the father had sent him to do. That is what sustained him.

So was Jesus not hungry? He was hungry. But he needed to make a point. He was fully human. He got hungry. He got tired. He was just like you and me. The point is not that Jesus never was hungry or tired. What he is saying is what is the most important thing? What is worth sacrificing? The physical is worth sacrificing. In order to accomplish that which is spiritual, the physical is worth sacrificing. As it pertains to us is seeking to win the lost, those that we love, there are times when that takes physical sacrifice. Maybe it has happened to you. You're trying to study the Bible with someone, and the study just goes late into the night. It's gone past your bedtime. You're tired. But you know what's most important at that time.

Continuing that study is more important. Answering that question for a soul that needs to know is more important. Trying to help them see God's truth. It might literally mean skipping a meal like it did for Jesus. The focus here is what is most important. The spiritual is the most important.

13. Jesus believed there were always souls ready for harvest.

Have you noticed how many famous sayings are right here together in John chapter 4? "God is spirit, those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." "My meat is to do the will of him who sent me." Here Jesus gives another statement that is often used by missionaries around the world. "Look. Lift up your eyes. For the fields are already white unto harvest." We live in wheat country. You know what it's like to look at a wheat field at harvest time. It's a golden color. The heads all have those beards on them. When the wind blows it's like waves of wheat. Have you ever tried to walk in the middle of a wheat field that's ready for harvest? If you do, you're being touched by wheat all around. Everywhere you go you're being touched by wheat that is ready for harvest. That's what Jesus is saying.

Remember that earlier in John chapter four as God tells John what to write, he adds that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. All the disciples of Jesus that are traveling with him are Jews. If they had been to Samaria before, it wasn't that often. The Jews did not like those people. And yet here is Jesus in Samaria talking to a Samaritan woman.

And Jesus is talking about the people around. What is Jesus trying to get his disciples to see? Right here in Sychar, Samaria, right here where we are, there are people who need to know the Lord. There are souls ready for harvest. That leads to a rhetorical question. Do I really believe that

there are people in my area who need to know about the Lord? The answer is obvious. Of course there are. Okay. Then what did Jesus tell his disciples to do? Look, and lift up your eyes. If I only see people in a physical way then that's just my neighbor, that's just the checker at the grocery store, that's just the banker, that's just my kid's teacher. If I only look at people like that, then I will never really see that those are people who need Jesus. Lift up your eyes. See people the way that God sees them. See how much God loves them. See how much he wants them to be saved. I need to see that my neighbor and my checker and my banker are a souls created and loved by God, and they need to know about him. That's when I realize that everywhere I go, I am touched by people who need to know the Lord. The fields are white for harvest. Everywhere we go. There are souls who need to be reached for the Lord. I need to change how I look at people. I need to change how I interact with people and how I talk to them. Look at them the way God does. Put sharing my faith a little higher on the priority list.

14. Jesus saw Joy in the future.

Jesus saw Joy for both parties involved in a conversion. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life (v.36). So the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. Jesus in part is saying that the one who sows and the one who reaps both will find joy. There is joy all around when someone comes closer to the Lord, the sower, and when someone comes to the Lord, the reaper.

One of the most beautiful Scriptures is in Acts chapter 8 where Philip teaches the nobleman from Ethiopia. After the nobleman is baptized, Acts 8:39 tells us that they saw each other no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. Is that talking about the nobleman, or is that talking about Philip? You can read it either way. Philip probably went on his way rejoicing. We know that because hopefully

we know that feeling. You know what it's like when you have had some hand in helping someone become a Christian. Maybe you didn't conduct the Bible study with them. Maybe it wasn't you that baptized them. But maybe you prayed for them. Maybe you sent them a card encouraging them. Maybe you just got in an encouraging word where you could. But you know that feeling. The power is not in you. The power is in the gospel. But you had some part in helping someone come closer to the Lord. And when they become a Christian, you feel the joy that is indescribable, unexplainable.

But so does that person. Acts chapter 8 may have been talking about the nobleman. Then he went on his way rejoicing. When someone comes up out of the waters of baptism, there is a hope in their life that they never knew before. There is a joy because they are washed clean from their sins. There is joy for everyone. Luke 15 says that there is rejoicing in heaven. A great big party. Rejoicing everywhere. So, Jesus saw future joy for everyone that would have a hand in teaching the Samaritans. And he saw joy for the Samaritans who would end up coming to the Lord.

Number 15. Jesus recognized that some conversions take more effort.

You can read John chapter 4 and think that, of course, this woman began to believe. She's talking to Jesus. Of course Jesus knew what to say. Of course Jesus knew what to do. We read this and we begin to doubt ourselves. We tried to talk to someone. We tried to teach others. We tried to encourage them. And it didn't work. We doubt ourselves. I'm not Jesus. Jesus speaks about that in this text. In verses 37-38, "Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true., I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored. And you have entered into their labor." Part of what Jesus is saying is that sometimes it's going to take more than one person. He said other people have laid some groundwork here. Now you, my

disciples, are stepping into that. Others have labored. Hard work. Intense work. Jesus is saying that sometimes reaching a person is going to take more effort than other times. Sometimes it will take more than one person. So maybe you have been studying with someone, and it just doesn't seem to be going well. I need to try something else. I tried everything I know to try. Is there someone else that could help? Maybe someone else could come and hold a Bible study with them. It's not about me. Let someone else step in and try that. I will continue to pray for them. I will continue to do what I can.

Did Jesus convert everyone he talked to? No. In Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, some of the very people in that crowd cried out, "What shall we do?" And they would go on to be baptized. Two months earlier they were in a crowd screaming, "Crucify him!" These were people who had heard Jesus teach. Even Jesus didn't convert everyone. In Acts chapter 2 Peter and the apostles have the charge of spreading the gospel. They would hand the reins to others. Who would hand them to others. And now they have been handed to you. Some people just take more effort than others. It's encouraging to know that.

Number 16. Jesus changed his schedule for souls.

Jesus is on his way to Galilee. He's passing through Samaria, and here the woman goes into the town. She tells them what she knows, and they are curious. They have questions. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, but he had to hurry off because he had too much to do. No! Jesus stayed there two more days. Jesus had somewhere to be. How do you give up two whole days? Wasn't he busy? Everywhere Jesus went he was busy. He was healing. He was teaching the gospel. He was training his apostles. Jesus is supposed to be in Galilee. And these Samaritans want him to stay. Not just for a meal. Can

you stay for a while? Absolutely I can. I'd love to. Do we fill our own calendars with so much stuff for us that we don't have time for the lost? When we don't have time for the lost, that's just not right.

This is hard to say, it is hard to hear. Satan does not mind us doing good stuff. As long as we're too busy to do the best stuff. Go ahead. Do all the good stuff you want. Just don't do the best stuff. Jesus gave up two whole days for a group of people the Jews wouldn't even speak to. We are being touched all around by people who need to know about the Lord. Will we even stop to speak to them?

Number 17. Jesus knew that a team is more effective.

The woman goes back to town and talks about Jesus. Could this be the Christ? And the people respond to that. We've heard what you said, but now we've heard it for ourselves. She was part of their conversion. She brought them to Jesus. But she couldn't do everything. How much could she know? She had only known Jesus for a few hours. She had enough motivation and excitement to go to the others and say, "Could this be the Christ?" There was something about it that aroused the people's curiosity. Praise God that she drew them closer to Jesus. There was a party in heaven for the Samaritans that day.

The principal is that there had to be more than one person to encourage all these people. My friends no one can do everything. There's not any one of us, not even an Elder or a Preacher, that can know everyone you know. There's not any one of us that can encourage everybody. There's not any one of us that can teach everybody. There's not any one of us that can teach everyone to grow in their faith the way that all of us can do it together. We begin to see that no I'm not this and I'm not that, but I do have a role to play. I do have a part in personal

evangelism. Am I as good as the other person at a Bible study? We did not read anything in here about that. Well only the best of you should be teaching Bible studies. That's not in here. But you finding your part and you doing your part is in here. You are part of the team. No one can do all of it by themselves. But praise God we have the best team there is. If God is for us, who can be against us. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it's the power of God to salvation. God is on our side. Jesus is on our side. Think about John chapter four. Who finished the Bible study? Jesus did. Well of course it worked. But I'm the one trying to finish the Bible study. I'm not Jesus. The great commission promises that if we will be about trying to teach people and share the gospel, that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the world. Jesus is on our team! He just showed us so many great lessons about sharing our faith.

There are over one million people in the Oklahoma City area. Everywhere you go you're being touched all around by people who need to know about the Lord. Lift up your eyes. See them the way that God sees them. See them with the same love that God sees them. We were not anything special until we accepted God's mercy and his grace. We were just like them. Aren't you glad someone brought you to the Lord? We need to love the lost the way God does. We pray for God's blessing upon our efforts. We pray for his wisdom and his power as we go into the world and preach the gospel.

Rick Crooks
Oklahoma City, OK

A Sense of Direction

As I stepped out of the house earlier this morning to begin the day's activities, I immediately knew the seasons were changing. The air was brisk to say the least, and then from the sky came further evidence in the familiar sound of flocks of geese flying south. Since my earliest years I have been amazed in watching the "V" shaped flocks as they change leaders and then press on to their winter habitat. Each time I witness this, my mind begins to think of the great instinct that God has placed within these birds. Although many of them have never made this journey, they are still drawn to the same areas by way of the flyways year-after-year.

While considering that great "sense of direction" within them, I think about man, and how he at times seems to not possess that sense at all. Our nation's prisons are full of individuals who have followed the course of their own choosing. Counselor's offices are full of couples who are tired of trying to find their own way, and so desperately want some normalcy in their marriage. Our world is literally dotted with re-hab facilities that await the next young or older person who has become dependent on drugs or alcohol. Why does it seem as though many are just blundering around in the darkness and stumble over every obstacle?

The answer is they are allowing the world to lead them! God's word tells us "*it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps*" (Jer. 10:23). You see, it's not that God hasn't given man more than ample "direction"; there are simply those who think their way is better. "*There is a way that seems right to a man...*" (Prov. 14:12). Our way in life is not meant to be our own. We are created to belong to God! Man is expected to walk in the path which God has marked out for him in the word. It's when man fails to "*walk in the light*" that he finds himself in constant trouble.

We are in desperate need of God's divine guidance, and it is freely given to all who will accept it. When we live by God's word, it doesn't mean all the disappointments and sadness in life disappear, but it does mean there is one with you who understands. God challenges all who "*labor and are heavy laden*" to seek his guidance, and not to try it alone. "*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his*

way and not turned aside” (Job 23:10-11).

Tom Bennett
Spearsville, LA

A Preacher on Fire

Stephen Beach was only doing what I and many other preachers have been forced to do. After social distancing was mandated in England because of the coronavirus pandemic, Beach went online to members of the St. Budeaux Church in Plymouth, southwestern England.

The story carried by Reuters News Service said this was his first attempt at bringing a message of hope through the Internet. On March 19 he had arranged some candles on his desk and was discussing the need to have quiet time in one’s life. And then this happened: “Oh dear, I just caught on fire,” he exclaimed, batting and blowing out the flame on his shoulder. “Oh my word!” (He apparently was not burned in the mishap.)

Being “on fire” is not always a bad thing. In our culture it has become an idiom suggesting enthusiasm or success at something. Red Barber, a legendary sports broadcaster, once referred to an athlete as “running like a bunny with his tail on fire”. In sports it is a compliment for others to say that you’re on fire.

The prophet Jeremiah was not pleased with the assignment given to him by God. He was sent to preach to Judah, a nation that had largely drifted away from God. When Jeremiah spoke God’s word, the results weren’t encouraging: “I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me” (Jeremiah 20:7).

Understandably, Jeremiah was about ready to walk away from his mission. If the people didn’t receive his message, it was their own fault, right? But then he reasoned: “If I say, ‘I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones” (Jeremiah 20:9). He couldn’t be quiet!

Sometimes anger affects us in that way. We are upset with something we see or that we’ve heard, and our temper rises to the boiling point. Finally we “explode” with words we never should have said. An angry person is often described as “a hot-head”.

Jeremiah’s “fire”, however, was a good thing. He knew that God was speaking the truth through him, and that truth badly needed to be proclaimed. Thus he resolved to keep on speaking despite the mockery of others, to keep on giving vent to the fire within.

The world needs more “preachers on fire” to speak the truth, even when others may laugh at it. Paul instructed Timothy to do just that in 2 Timothy 4:1-4: “... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.”

God’s word should kindle a fire within our bones. Do I need to heed the words of 2 Timothy 1:6, to “... fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you ...”?

Timothy D. Hall
LightGrams, April 9, 2020

Barber Evangelism

There was a barber that thought that he should share his faith with his customers more than he had been doing lately. So the next morning when the sun came up and the barber got up out of bed he said, "Today I am going to witness to the first man that walks through my door."

Soon after he opened his shop the first man came in and said, "I want a shave!" The barber said, "Sure, just sit in the seat and I'll be with you in a moment." The barber went in the back and prayed a quick desperate prayer saying, "God, the first customer came in and I'm going to witness to him. Give me the wisdom to know just the right thing to say to him. Amen."

Then, quickly the barber came out with his razor knife in one hand and a Bible in the other while saying "Good morning, sir. I have a question God wants me to ask.... Are you ready to die?"

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