Articles and Sermons :: Problems with Friendship Evangelism

Problems with Friendship Evangelism - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/14 16:02

Friendship Evangelism Is Dishonest

Nowhere in the New Testament can we read of Jesus approaching people like this:
â€œSo youâ€™re not really interested in giving your life for God? Donâ€™t worry, just come and join us for some funâ€¦â€• (i.e. relaxing together, listening to music, playing sport or some other hobby).
However, in the back of his mind he thinks: â€œâ€¦if they just come to the games night, I can get a chance to slip in a few words about the gospel.â€•

Jesus respected peopleâ€™s wish not to live with God, and did not try to influence (manipulate) them, not even â€œfor their own goodâ€• (i.e. that they might be saved). He knew it doesnâ€™t work that way and that any other approach than a direct one is not honest. Appealing to peopleâ€™s desires in order to influence them is sheer manipulationâ€”just like any worldly marketing strategy which tries to push people into buying things they never really wanted. In this way people are treated as objects rather than individuals with a free will. In contrast to this, Christian love means taking people seriously in their beliefs and opinions, and not using deceitful tactics in order to â€œwin them overâ€•. Remember the example of Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:1â€“5.

Enticing people with things they like also gives a distorted picture of Christianity because it gives the impression that you can hold on to your life (your pleasures). Such an approach makes it seem as if there is little difference between the life of a believer and an unbeliever.

Friendship Evangelism Encourages a Worldly Lifestyle

The problem is that many religious people themselves see no problem in pursuing their pleasures while living with God. Through their lives (their words may sound different) they proclaim that faith is just like another hobby you can fit alongside your other worldly interests. Faith becomes something to be touched on every now and then, as one feels like it, rather than being something that consumes a Christianâ€™s entire life.

Where the wish to give oneâ€™s life completely for God is missing, friendship evangelism provides a convenient excuse to continue sinning under the guise of remaining â€œrelatableâ€•, or â€œbuilding a baseâ€• to talk about God with others. This approach is neither honest towards oneself, nor towards God or other people.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14)

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." (John 12:25â€“26)

When friendship evangelism is used to justify doing things that do not please God, there is practically no limit to what is possible for a Christian to do. Some take a slightly milder approach, only going as far as inviting unbelievers for a games evening at homeâ€¦others take it as far as going to parties or to the disco (or still worse, holding a â€œChristianâ€• disco) in the name of â€œevangelismâ€•.

Some religious people even go to great lengths to prove to unbelievers: â€œIâ€™m no different to youâ€¦Iâ€™m a fan of the same football teamâ€¦I listen to the same musicâ€¦I saw the same movie as youâ€¦â€•

This does not help people to repent because it hinders them in understanding Godâ€™s holiness and denies that many such activities are in themselves sinful.

John writes:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father not in them. For everything in the worldâ€"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of lifeâ€"comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." (1 John 2:15â€"17)

Christians Cannot Make Friends with the World

It is normal for Christians to seek Godâ€™s will in everything they do, as too, is the longing to view day to day occurrences with his eyes. This leads to fundamentally different perspectives on almost everything and to entirely different priorities and usage of time than for unbelievers. As a Christian strives to live a holy and godly life, they will be confronted with how incompatible their life is with that of unbelievers.

This is not a â€œproblemâ€• to be overcome by making compromises, but a natural, albeit painful, part of being â€œaliens and strangersâ€• in the world that Christians must humbly accept (Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11).

Jesus himself made no apologies for his choice of friends:

You are my friends if you do what I command. (John 15:14)

He did not try to be friends with everyone. He knew that those who reject his message live in opposition to God and that his path was an entirely different one to theirs.

These passages express the separation that exists between a believer and an unbeliever:

"You adulterous people, donâ€™t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?" (James 4:4â€"5)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is yourlife, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived." (Colossians 3:1â€"7)

When Jesus sent the disciples out to preach the gospel he commanded them to separate from those who were not open for their message:

"Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town." (Matthew 10:11â€"15)

Likewise, Paul expressed how impossible it is for believers and unbelievers to share in fellowship:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: â€œI will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.â€• Therefore, â€œCome out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.â€• And, â€œI will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.â€• Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 6:14â€"7:1)

Paul borrows this picture from the law: â€œDo not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked togetherâ€• (Deuteronomy 22:10). To do so would make ploughing a straight line near impossible. Similarly, a believer wants to do things which bring glory to God, and an unbeliever does not. In spiritual matters they cannot work together, and everything in a Christianâ€

™s life is to be considered spiritually. There is no â€œfree timeâ€• in which spiritual principles do not apply. Every situati on is a service to God (â€œserviceâ€• is not a Sunday morning meeting, see Romans 12:1â€“2).

The attitude of wanting to serve God cannot remain a theoretical wish, but necessarily leads to completely different activi ties and use of time to unbelievers. Apart from the daily responsibilities of work or school etc., we have to consider how we use our time and what the priorities are. Unbelievers often look for their own aims such as how to amuse themselves , but believers look at how Jesus lived and seek tasks that are not for their own amusement, but which serve Godâ€™s kingdomâ€”such as fellowship with other believers, or evangelism, reading the Bible, prayer etc.

The passage in 2 Corinthians 6:14 ff. is often wrongly limited to marriage or partnership.

The context of verse 14 contains no mention of marriage. Paul uses very strong expressions to show the opposition bet ween the life of a believer and an unbeliever. They have no more agreement than Christ with idols! To exclude that this passage refers to friendships would be inconsistent with other passages in scripture that speak about separation (see P salm 1, 1 Peter 4:3â€“5, Matthew 10:34â€“36, Matthew 18:15â€“18, James 4:4â€“6, Ephesians 5:3â€“7, 1 John 1:5â€“7). It would also be arbitrary to refer this only to marriage and not to friendships. If there is such a difference between beli evers and unbelievers, how can friendship be possible?

Paul did not mean, however, that Christians cannot co-operate with unbelievers at all, for example in the workplace or at school. At work, the tasks in themselves are not opposed to God, and a Christian can show a good example by working i n a way which pleases God. In such contexts, it is important to be cooperative, helpful and considerate. Respect and su bmission to authorities is also biblical (Romans 13:1â€“7). We should only be careful not to compromise our faith. If Chri stians did not work in normal society, they would have to leave it entirelyâ€”which would be unbiblical (John 17:15).

A strong reason for many people to take part in things they know deep down are not pleasing to God is the fear of peopl eâ€™s reactionsâ€”the fear of losing friendships and being rejected. Looking for acceptance by unbelievers leads a per son very far from God. Concerning this, Jeremiah wrote:

This is what the Lord says: â€œCursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose he art turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it come s. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. â€œBut blessed is the one who t rusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never f ails to bear fruit.â€• (Jeremiah 17:5â€“8)

Concerning the consequences of pleasing people see also: John 5:44 and 12:42â€“43, Luke 9:26, Galatians 1:10.

Friendship Evangelism Is Exclusive

Favoring Some and Not Others

Jesus loved everyone and was ready to give everything in order to lead them to a relationship with God. He did not want people to attach themselves to him personally.

"Then Jesusâ€™ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting a round him, and they told him, â€œYour mother and brothers are outside looking for you.â€• â€œWho are my mother an d my brothers?â€• he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, â€œHere are my mother a nd my brothers! Whoever does Godâ€™s will is my brother and sister and mother.â€• (Mark 3:31â€“35)

Jesus was open for everyone who wanted to know God. It was them to whom he devoted his time, and not the many wh o were not interested in hearing what he had to say.

Friendship evangelism on the other hand, leads to befriending a few people in order to â€œreachâ€• them with the gosp el. Often these relationships are built purely on personal preference (who it is that you like or find interesting, or where th ere is some common interestâ€”just like people in the world). This kind of friendship is based on selfish motives rather th an the selfless wish to serve whoever we can. Such relationships are also exclusiveâ€”some are preferred, others are n ot and remain alone.

Ask yourself: â€œWho is my real family? Who do I really have time for? Is God the aim of these relationships?â€•

By focusing on a few unbelieving friends, who may never decide to follow Christ, many are passed by who may well be s earching for God at this point in time. This is not love. We should be actively open for everyone who is looking for God ri ght now.

He said to another man, â€œFollow me.â€• But he replied, â€œLord, first let me go and bury my father.â€• Jesus said t o him, â€œLet the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.â€• (Luke 9:59â€“60)

Jesus calls the man to leave others to bury his father so that he can preach the good news to people who are searching for God. He says that those who are spiritually â€œdeadâ€• (i.e. who do not want to live with God) can take care of this t ask. This is of course not a rule against burying someone. It does, however, show that Jesus was ready to cut through s ocial norms in order to put the spiritual priorities first, even if it meant offending others. If he considered an occasion suc h as a burial so secondary, that the unbelievers should deal with it themselves, then how much less would he have spen t vast amounts of time doing unnecessary things with them?

So we see that Jesus did not consider it right to spend many months and years â€œpatientlyâ€• trying to draw people to himself. Through his words the urgency and priority of the matter was made clear and people were faced with the decisi on to accept or reject Godâ€™s call. Having chosen God, they too should follow their master in showing others what it means to put service in Godâ€™s kingdom first in their lives.

True friendships are built not on human preference, but on the common wish to serve God. Only then, when the focus is not pleasing each other, but pleasing God, can deep, free, selfless relationships develop. Such relationships are a testim ony to the world of the love that God works in those who follow him (see John 13:34).

People have many reasons for choosing who their friends areâ€”often based on common interests, human sympathies, personal preferences or advantagesâ€¦and other such aims, which are largely selfish. Christians, on the other hand, are called to love everyone, without bias. This love means inviting them to know God and his love. If people reject this love, t hen we have to accept that we cannot help them.

Clinging to People Endangers Spiritual Life

For many, the wish that loved ones will be saved is a great hindrance to clearly assessing their lack of openness. This, i n turn, leads to making compromises concerning matters of obedience to God because of the expectations of friends an d relatives, and to losing the clear spiritual assessment of how important it is to look for Godâ€™s will in everything. By t his the standard for Christian life, that is, the truth, is changed.

Jesus knew that clinging to people will hold many back from entering the Kingdom of God. He loved people more than a nyone. He was aware that love means not compromising the message, or trying to make the narrow way broader, and th at it is not possible to live with God without taking up the cross.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter thro ugh it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13â€“14)

Those who attempt to make the narrow way broader so that those they love are included, depart from the message of Je sus. They cannot then lead other people to God and will lose the way to life themselves. This is not loveâ€”even if it mig ht look and feel like love to live up to the expectations of others.

It was for good reason that to those following him, Jesus said:

"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter mor e than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds t heir life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:37â€“39)

Friendship Evangelism Hinders Deeper Community Life

In order to maintain relationships with unbelievers you have to spend (much) time with them. If all believers do that, then

they cannot really share deep committed relationships with one another, because each of them does different things during the week. They have trouble finding time to come together: one person has volleyball on Mondays, the other has art club on Tuesdays, another arranged to see a film with work colleagues on Wednesdayâ€¦and so the list continues. There is simply not the time anymore to meet together each day to read the Bible and share their lives. This is not the pattern of life we can read of in the New Testament. Of the Jerusalem community we know:

"They devoted themselves to the apostlesâ€™ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42â€“47)

Here we see that the Christians devoted their lives to each other. They invited others to share this with them. Their common life was by no means a hindrance in having enough time to call unbelievers to life with God. We have much evidence of how they worked together to call people (instead of each one carrying out their own personal â€œmissionâ€•). Through sharing they were able to support one another and free up more capacity for evangelism and for fellowship. Their love for each other and the unity among them was the testimony to the change of life that salvation brings and demonstrated very visibly what it means to give oneâ€™s whole life to Christ.

"See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called â€œTodayâ€•, so that none of you may be hardened by sinâ€™s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end." (Hebrews 3:12â€“14)

The writer of Hebrews encourages the Christians in this passage to show care and concern for each otherâ€™s spiritual lives every day. Furthermore, he connects this with a strong warning to ensure that everyone receives the help they need to overcome sin. The fight for holiness leads naturally to the recognition that we are weak, and need much strengthening in our Christian walk.

Source: http://www.christians.eu/friendship-evangelism/#part-ii-problems-with-friendship-evangelism

Re: Problems with Friendship Evangelism - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/1/14 16:12

I don't know of anyone who goes out of their way to befriend someone with the ulterior motive of preaching the gospel to them. Awkward.

I agree Jesus did not do this. But he was *friendly* when preaching the gospel (except to the Pharisees of course).

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/14 17:25

Quick disclaimer, I may not agree with 100 percent of the OP article. I shared it because I thought it may help bring a balance to the recent discussions here on evangelism. I agree with probably most of the article.

Re: What is friendship evangelism? - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/14 18:34

Thought this was another good article on this topic:

Question: "What is friendship evangelism?"

Answer: Friendship evangelism as a method of bringing people to Christ or sharing the gospel of Christ has several meanings and connotations. Some people believe that friendship evangelism requires Christians to become friends with unbelievers, establishing a relationship before attempting to address their need for a Savior. Some see friendship evangelism as living a solid, righteous lifeâ€”a living testimonyâ€”before others so that they desire that kind of life and ask how to achieve it. At that point, the gospel is shared. Still others believe that living a righteous life in the world is evangelism enough and that no further efforts are necessary. The theory is that unbelievers will be so convicted of their need for that kind of life that they will seek God on their own. What does the Bible say about friendship evangelism?

Each of the three above-named methods of friendship evangelism falls short of the biblical method of evangelism. The first method, becoming friends with unbelievers in order to gain enough credibility so they will listen to the gospel, fails to r

ecognize several important biblical truths. For one thing, believers are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14â€“17). The essence of friendship is mutual respect and affection based on agreement on basic life principles. But can a believer really have such a relationship with an unbeliever? In light of James 4:4 and Ephesians 5:11, such a relationship is not biblical. The unsaved person is part of the world, which hates God and the people of God. How can such a person have affection and respect for believers, who are part of the kingdom of God? Are we to be friendly towards unbelievers? Absolutely! Are we to have intimate relationships with unbelievers? Biblically speaking, no.

Furthermore, neither Jesus nor the disciples practiced this type of friendship evangelism. Jesus didnâ€™t limit His gospel presentations to His friends and relations. He preached to complete strangers the message of repentance from sin and salvation through Him. He sent His disciples out two by two, and they â€œpreached that people should repentâ€• (Mark 6:12). If people refused to listen to them, Jesus instructed them to â€œshake the dustâ€• off their feet and move on to the next town. He never encouraged them to settle down for a few months and develop friendships with those who rejected His message. Nor did He tell them to avoid quoting Scriptures so that their hearers wouldnâ€™t be offended or turned off to the gospel. He knew that the â€œmessage of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishingâ€• (1 Corinthians 1:18) and that most people will reject that message, no matter how friendly the manner in which it is presented. Christ was rejected by the world, and He told us to expect the same reaction (John 15:18â€“20).

What about the method of â€œevangelizingâ€• through our living testimony? There is no doubt that we are to live righteous lives before the watching world, and there certainly is power in the testimony of a life transformed by Christ. A classic example of this is Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1â€“42). Jesus was able to tell her everything about her life, including the sin she was living in now. Jesus, in His infallible way, gave her the gospel, and, of course, she believed. John 4:39 picks up the story: â€œMany of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the womanâ€™s testimony, â€˜He told me everything I ever did.â€™ 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 believersâ€• (John 4:39â€“41).

Everyone in that town knew this woman and the sordid life she lived. What caused them to believe in Christ was not only her words about Jesus, but her transformed life. She was a living testimony to the power of the gospel of Christ. So impactful was the change in her life that they knew something miraculous had happened, and they asked Jesus to remain with them, which He did for two days, preaching the same gospel of repentance and the offer of the living water of eternal life through Him. â€œAnd many more believed because of his wordâ€• (John 4:41). In this instance, both the preaching of the Word of God and the testimony of a life changed by that Word bore the fruit of repentance.

But was the womanâ€™s changed life sufficient to bring others to the Savior? No, but it was the impetus for them to seek more information. Can we today expect that our lives will be sufficient testimony to convince unbelievers of their need for Christ? The problem that arises in this third type of friendship evangelism is that too often the lives of Christians are not a good witness of the Lord and Savior we profess to know and serve. Too often the world sees in us more of a reflection of them than a reflection of Christ. To rely exclusively on the â€œliving testimonyâ€• of redeemed sinners who, while saved by grace, still battle the flesh on a daily basisâ€”without the testimony of the truth of Scriptureâ€”is to handcuff ourselves in a way the Bible never bids us to do. Not even the most well-lived life can compare with the power of the Word of God. â€œFor the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heartâ€• (Hebrews 4:12). â€œIs not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?â€• (Jeremiah 23:29).

Clearly, the biblical method of evangelism is the faithful proclamation of the truth of Scripture in conjunction with the living testimony of those who have been changed by that truth. When Jesus went about teaching the gospel message of salvation, He taught love and forgiveness, being kind and compassionate. But He went to sinners in order to convict them of their sins. A case in point is the very Samaritan woman weâ€™ve been talking about here. Remember . . . the very first word Jesus said when He began His ministry was â€œRepent!â€• â€œFrom that time on Jesus began to preach, â€˜Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is nearâ€™â€• (Matthew 4:17). We are commissioned to bring that same message to the world, speaking the truth in love from a heart changed by the Savior.

Read more: http://www.gotquestions.org/friendship-evangelism.html#ixzz3OrIJqiXb

Re: Problems with Friendship Evangelism - posted by wijnand (), on: 2015/1/15 3:01

I understand what you mean with this topic, but it seems like a little bit "oversized".

Yes, we cannot be friends with the world, but I desire that we become servants of the people around us. It is true that we must preach the gospel so that people can be saved. But the bible clearly teaches that we must do good works in the mi dst of the unbelievers and that we must shine our lights.
The Lord spoke to me about this... in a time that I was praying and saying "God, why is there so little fruit" and the answ er from God was: "You will bear fruit if you shine your light in the darkness". So for me that was the call of trying to seek people that aren't saved and share the gospel with them.

About the topic again:
I think that you can have some kind of relationship with the people around you, such as colleges, family, etc. That is not t he same as the deep relationship you have with brothers, but to cut yourselve away from these kind of relationships is n ot biblical. They shouldn't have the first priority, but they have a place. In these relationship you must pray for openings f or the gospel, share your faith when it's possible and try to win them for God. If they don't want, then let your works do th e testimony and maybe when openings are there, you should again try to share the gospel. But the problem with some i s that they spend all there time trying to reach there family that is refusing, and spending no time with neighbours or peo ple on the street. Reach out to people, meet them in the street and try to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Serve the hun gry, the poor, the needy, the orphans, the widows, the prostitutes, the pimps, the drugsdealers, the junks, the young, the old, the gothics, the ... etc. Serve them, share about Christ and follow the Lord in your own live.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/15 17:15

Jesus... "Friend" of sinners.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/15 17:59

I've often heard from certain Christians and/or ministers comments such as, "I used to hand out tracts and preach on the streets when I was a young believer, but I grew out of that sort of thing."

Sadly to say, I believe that indicates a developed lukewarmness and apathy that sets in over time. It's a loss of one's firs t love.

Christ told the Ephesian church, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent."-Rev. 2:5

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/15 18:58

The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a friend of sinners because He spent time with them. The articles I shared did no t say Christians shouldn't spend any time with the lost. They simply make the case that we should be intentional and upfr ont in sharing the gospel with them when we do spend time with them. In other words, we should not try to beat around t he bush and side step the issue of their need to hear the gospel message.

Jesus spent time with the lost to preach the gospel to them. We see that throughout His ministry. He did not spend time with them just to hang out and have a few drinks and enjoy some pastime with them.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/1/15 19:07

What happens a lot is that a gifted evangelist is given a pulpit to preach, then he preaches a sermon about the importan ce of being an evangelist and personally winning people to Jesus Christ. And everyone agrees that they should be more like him, and feels bad that they aren't, and therefore wants to try to change. But when the rubber meets the road they di scover they are still just themselves and end up getting rather depressed over it.

I believe, though this might sound awful, that too much has been made of 'personal evangelism' if by that term we envisi on every Christian going around boldly declaring the Gospel verbally to people. I've often heard pastors & teachers teac hing and read authors writing about being 'fishers of men' in the sense that each one of us, individually, needs to figure o ut things like bait, a hook, a line, etc. However, the fishers of men passage is talking about fishing with nets as a group- l ike the disciples fished. Evangelism is teamwork. If we wanted to press the metaphor further, we could say we not only n eed the fishermen, but also people to mend the nets, build the boats, cook for the fishermen, etc.

All that to say this. There are people specifically called and gifted as Evangelists. I would add that all of us are called an d gifted to be evangelical in the sense that we should love lost people and have a desire for them to come into the Kingd om of God. But maybe only a few of us are "capital E" Evangelists. If truth be told, some non-Christians are pretty turned -off by boldness. They are much more likely to come into the Kingdom through the influence of a quiet & Christ-like frien d. That's just the way it is. I am turned off by fiery street preachers and I'm a Christian!

My tentative advice would be this. Admire Evangelists, but don't insist that God turn you into one. He gives gifts as He s ees fit. Instead, be ready to share the Gospel within the context of your own personality. Don't be ashamed of who you a re in Jesus Christ. Find a role that you can play as a team member in the corporate work of evangelism. If you are a me nder of nets, and you are good at that, don't feel bad because you aren't personally hauling the fish in. Without your me nded net there would be no fish.

Re: - posted by MrBillPro (), on: 2015/1/15 20:02

When Jesus returned to His own country, He went to the synagogue and began to teach the people. The people who h eard Jesus speak were astonished at His wisdom and wondered where He had received it. They had also heard about all of the miracles that He had preformed and marveled at the mighty works that He had done. Yet, they were offended at Jesus because they knew Him as the natural son Mary and of Joseph who was a simple carpenter. Their limited faith would not allow them to believe that He was the Son of God. Because they did not honor Jesus or have faith in Him, He could not do any mighty works in their midst. Jesus, the miracle worker, was only able to heal a few sick people by layin g His hands on them (Mark 6:5).

To me, being able to heal a few sick people is still a mighty miracle that is beyond human ability. Yet, Jesus could have done so much more in their midst if they had just given Him honor and believed in Him. Jesus marveled at the people's unbelief, but He understood that a prophet was without honor in his own country, amongst his own kin, and in his own h ouse. Jesus did not allow this setback to stop His mission, but continued to go throughout the villages and teach. He co uld have become discouraged and thought that His season to minister was over. Jesus could have believed that God, t he Father, had lifted the anointing from His life and that He no longer had power to do miracles. Many things could have raced through His mind in this disappointing hour, but Jesus didn't give in to those thoughts or allow the people's lack of faith to control His own destiny. He just kept doing the will of the Father.

I believe that the Holy Spirit shared this story with us as an example to keep us from being discouraged. If the lack of fai th on people's part could affect Jesus' ministry, it can surely affect ours. There will be seasons in all of our lives when w e are limited by the faith of others. We can share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with others, but we can't force faith into their hearts. We can witness to them about healing, but we can't make them believe. We can show them the way t o deliverance from their addictions, but we can't lay down bad habits for them. We can teach them how to believe God f or their provisions, but we can't receive their blessings for them. We are just as limited as Jesus was when He ministere d. The people that we minister to must exert their own faith in order to receive. They may not want to receive our words of hope, for like the crowds who listened to Jesus, they refuse to acknowledge the anointing on our lives and just recogni ze us as just a family member or a common acquaintance.

We must not get discouraged when we have done all that we could do, and said all that we could say, and there has bee n no positive response. We must understand that we are not responsible for the spiritual heartbeat of others. We are o nly responsible to obey God. When everything seems to have failed and we see unbelief all around us, we must do as J esus did and that is to continue to minister as God has called us to do.

Re: , on: 2015/1/15 20:04

Hi Oracio,
Timely discussion as a dear brother in Christ suggested that I invite people over on holidays, play games, just get to kno w them.

Trouble is I see people do that for years and years and no one seems to grow in the Lord or get saved by this kind of ap proach.

I read part of the article! I believe the best approach is to hear the voice of the Shepherd every day and let Him lead. Thi s gets away from having to "figure out" how to fish for men.

This same dear brother who suggested friendship evangelism did give a very good word to me. He said, just water and

don't try to reach the roots, you just water!
That made sense to me because I am always trying to see the results of what I am doing, when really, that is not my job.

My "job" really is easy, to listen to and obey the Lord. His yoke is easy, his burden is light and it is always surprising and exciting when we yield to Him. Sometimes you see nothing happen, but you know you obeyed!

Thanks for discussion!
Sister Leslie

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2015/1/16 5:06

TMK wrote:
"I've often heard pastors & teachers teaching and read authors writing about being 'fishers of men' in the sense that eac h one of us, individually, needs to figure out things like bait, a hook, a line, etc. However, the fishers of men passage is t alking about fishing with nets as a group- like the disciples fished. Evangelism is teamwork. If we wanted to press the m etaphor further, we could say we not only need the fishermen, but also people to mend the nets, build the boats, cook fo r the fishermen, etc."

Thanks for this, I like what you brought out here.

Yes we all have our own calling and gifts from the Lord. Some may be called and gifted in street preaching and others in one on one relational evangelism. Let each one do as they are called and let us support one another in this and not spe ak against what we don't see as right for us.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/16 9:21

Quote:

Jesus spent time with the lost to preach the gospel to them. We see that throughout His ministry. He did not spend time with them just to hang out and have a few drinks and enjoy some pastime with them.

I'm sorry, this is just bad theology, and blatantly ignores the fact that most of Jesus "ministry" was done simply over dinn er. Jesus was a friend of sinners. They saw him as one of them, and frequently invited him to their dinner parties.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/16 9:23

Quote:

The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a friend of sinners because He spent time with them. The articles I shared did not say Christians shouldn't spen d any time with the lost

---

What do you think friendship is? Friendship is simply spending time with people you care for, and have some commonal ity/relationship with. There is something about their personality you like, and you enjoy some common activities. Being around each other is something you like, so you do a bit of it.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/16 9:27

Quote:

I've often heard from certain Christians and/or ministers comments such as, "I used to hand out tracts and preach on the streets when I was a young b eliever, but I grew out of that sort of thing."

I've done a ton of this, though I haven't done much of it recently, but am not opposed to doing it again in the future. To my knowledge, I've never lead one person to Jesus directly as a result of such witnessing. Though, I suspect there are 2 or 3 people who were so greatly influenced by this form of witnessing that they probably eventually accepted Jesus.

Most the people I've lead to the Lord in my life I would consider friends. The rest were people that came to know Jesus t hrough my preaching in a pulpit.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/16 9:35

And the Pharisees charged Jesus with being a "friend of sinners." And Jesus replied to the multitude: "No, these people I just ate dinner with are not my friends as you suppose, but these are just lost souls I'm ministering to. Please don't thin k these are really my friends." And his dinner guests hung their heads in embarrasement, as they considered Jesus thei r friend.

(NotTheGospel 15:1 - KJV)

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/16 12:58

There has been a big push for many years for seeker sensitive, seeker friendly outreach by which churches are willing to do just about anything to reach outsiders. This type of methodology and mindset is usually seen in the emergent types o f churches that water down and deny much of Godâ€™s Word. Their focus is on numbers. â€œThe bigger the numbers â€•, they say, â€œthe more successful.â€• All the while they do not realize that the vast majority of their â€œconvertsâ€ • are not saved at all. They get them to repeat the prayer and get baptized by the hundreds, but it is mostly a shallow sh ow with no real saving roots of true conversion or salvation. Sadly, well-meaning Christians can get lulled into that type o f scenario and it can be hard to help them see the deception they are caught up in. All you can do sometimes is pray for them.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/16 13:16

Quote:
----------Hi Oracio,
Timely discussion as a dear brother in Christ suggested that I invite people over on holidays, play games, just get to know them.

Trouble is I see people do that for years and years and no one seems to grow in the Lord or get saved by this kind of approach.

I read part of the article! I believe the best approach is to hear the voice of the Shepherd every day and let Him lead. This gets away from having to "fig ure out" how to fish for men.

This same dear brother who suggested friendship evangelism did give a very good word to me. He said, just water and don't try to reach the roots, you just water!
That made sense to me because I am always trying to see the results of what I am doing, when really, that is not my job.
My "job" really is easy, to listen to and obey the Lord. His yoke is easy, his burden is light and it is always surprising and exciting when we yield to Him.
Sometimes you see nothing happen, but you know you obeyed!

Thanks for discussion!
Sister Leslie

Amen sister! Indeed, our job is to sow or water the seed and it is God's job to give the increase. Sometimes we may see the increase and reap the harvest and sometimes we won't see it as someone else reaps it after we've sown or watered. There are countless testimonies of people coming to the Lord through the witness of Christians who do not see the resul ts themselves. I too have learned that I do not need to see immediate results in order to be successful in God's sight. I n

eed to be faithful to sow and water and trust God to give the increase as He sees fit. That relieves us from much unnece ssary pressure.

That indeed is a huge problem with many today; they want to see immediate results in order to consider themselves "su ccessful". When we have that kind of mindset we can easily be tempted to compromise the Word and become shallow in our witnessing efforts, thinking we are successful if we simply lead someone in a sinner's prayer.

Re: - posted by HereIAm, on: 2015/1/16 13:19

I've spent over 30 years in a church that practiced heavy legalism, fasting and denying oneself. The louder the preacher s yelled, the more they beat us up the more we shouted Amen! We mocked and made fun of so called grace and friends hip churches. I've read books and listened to sermons from Leanard Ravehill, Keith Green and countless other hell fire p reachers... and then one day in the middle of 2013.. I came to the "conclusion" I was going to hell and it brought me a str ange sense of peace. I had left that church of over 30 years and didn't know why. I was an usher, greeter, on the prayer team and a bible study leader. But..I came to realize I just could not fight this battle.. the devil had one. I openly mocked at the verse.. my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Then.. I listened to a sermon by a preacher named Joseph Prince. I had never heard the gospel like this before! The sca les fell from my eyes and I realized the meaning behind the simple verse.. the just shall live by faith! It has been a year si nce I heard the true gospel.. and I cannot get enough of my bible. All the old hymns have come alive for me and I share now with everyone about this amazing gospel of Grace! Friendship churches? I will take a church that is light on scriptur e and yet strong on friendship and love over any legalistic heavy burden hypocritical hell fire preaching church any day o f the week! The pharisees were strong on scripture.. but they had no heart of Jesus. The sinners were light on the Word. . but they were drawn to Him!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/16 19:04

Joseph Prince (birth name Xenonamandar Jegahusiee Singh) is a Word of Faith prosperity preacher like Joel Osteen, B enny Hinn, Creflo Dollar and others. It takes little research to find that out. I'd warn everyone to stay away from his teachi ng. His teaching on grace is seriously flawed and harmful. It is the type of hyper-grace teaching that Michael Brown has been warning about.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/1/16 19:21

I definitely agree w/ Oracio.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/16 23:40

Quote:
----------And the Pharisees charged Jesus with being a "friend of sinners." And Jesus replied to the multitude: "No, these people I just ate di nner with are not my friends as you suppose, but these are just lost souls I'm ministering to. Please don't think these are really my friends." And his din ner guests hung their heads in embarrasement, as they considered Jesus their friend.

(NotTheGospel 15:1 - KJV)

"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."-John 15:13

I'll stick with Jesus' explanation of who His friends are, thanks ;)

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/17 12:38

"Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus a nd His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating w ith the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinn ers?" 17 When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sic k. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."-Mark 2:15-17

That and many other passages give us ample evidence that Jesus did not simply have pastime with the lost with no inte ntion of sharing the gospel with them. He clearly told the Pharisees that he came to call sinners to repentance, which im

plies that as He spent time with the lost that is exactly what he did. That is not bad theology at all. We see Jesus consta ntly sharing the gospel of the kingdom everywhere He went. That is what He was known for.

Again, the problem is that in this post modern age God's Word has been largely diluted and Christians and churches hav e made all kinds of excuses for compromising and for not sharing the gospel with the lost.

So as you spend time with your non-believing friends, do you seek to follow in you Savior's footsteps and call them to re pentance?

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2015/1/17 13:28

Jesus spent the first 30 years of his life not sharing the gospel with people. I'm guessing while doing carpentry or constr uction work, he probably made a few friends, as jobs like that lend itself to friendship. They did things like invite him to di nner parties and weddings. You know, the things he continued to go to after John's baptism.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/17 16:28

Quote:
----------Jesus spent the first 30 years of his life not sharing the gospel with people.

"And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. 41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jeru salem according to the custom of the feast. 43 When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingere d behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; 44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 So when they did not find Him, t hey returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. 46 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in t he midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. 48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, wh y have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." 49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" 50 But they did not understand the statement w hich He spoke to them. 51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His moth er kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."-Lu ke 2:40-52

Even in His childhood our Lord was about His Father's business, growing in grace and knowledge of God's Word, and s haring it with others.

I can envision Him sharing God's Word even as a child with both family members and neighbors and/or other acquaintan ces. His face was set like flint on doing His Father's will and He did not waver from it, even from childhood.

No, not even from the example of our Lord's childhood can we be relieved of our duty to share God's truth with those aro und us.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2015/1/17 17:08

There simply is no evidence from God's Word that Jesus did not share the gospel and/or God's Word or minister to the l ost when He attended these certain types of gatherings. Again, there is ample evidence to the contrary. He set the exam ple of constantly sharing God's Word with the lost and we should follow that example.

The reality is that many of us get ashamed or afraid of offending others and that is why we don't share our faith. There ar e also other reasons and/or excuses we can try to have or make.

I'm not saying everyone is called to do evangelism in the exact same way. But I'm saying every believer is called to shar e his/her faith with the lost and seek to take advantage of any opportunity they may have to do that.

One of the tasks of those who operate in the office of an evangelist is to equip the church for the work of evangelism, i.e. how to biblically and effectively share their faith.-Ephesians 4:11-12

So while not all are called to operate in the office of an evangelist, all are called to evangelize the lost in some capacity.

Re: - posted by HereIAm, on: 2015/1/26 19:35

Joseph Prince is not a "prosperity preacher." He preaches the Gospel! Does the gospel produce prosperity? Yes it does. Is prosperity evil? No it's not. If you have nothing then you have nothing to give. God wants us to prosper in all things! Why? So we can be a blessing to others.