

Contemporary Evangelism In Light Of God's Word

Some Questions and Issues to Ponder

How can we properly evaluate contemporary evangelism?

"Prove all things (test all things by the Word of God); hold fast that which is good" (1 Th. 5:21; cf. Heb. 5:14; Phil. 1:9-10). The pragmatic approach is this: "If it works, it must be right! Look at the results! Souls are being saved! Things are really happening and so we must be in the center of God's will!" Our approach is this: "What saith the Scripture (cf. Rom. 4:3)? If God says it, then it must be right! What does God say about evangelism? What is God's methodology? What is God's priority in evangelism?" Evangelistic efforts must be judged and evaluated based not on results, but on God's unfailing Word.

Should fundamentalists cooperate in evangelistic efforts with theological liberals and / or Roman Catholics and other divergent groups? Should evangelistic crusades be sponsored by liberals, modernists and unbelievers? Should evangelicals call upon liberal churchmen to lead in prayer, head up committees and take part in counseling those making a decision?

The Bible gives this command: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6:14-17; cf. Rev. 18:4; Deut. 22:9-11). When an ox and a donkey are yoked up together they are involved with the same work. They are "on the same team," labouring together toward common goals and objectives. Believers are not to work together in co-operation with unbelievers in fulfilling the Great Commission. The football player would never think of giving the ball to a member of the opposite team! The Lord Jesus never enlisted unbelievers to carry out the work of God.. Our Lord's fixed attitude towards the false religious leaders and errorists of His day was one of righteous indignation, rebuke and merciless denunciation (Mt. 23:13-36). His attitude was certainly not one of conciliation, fellowship and approval.

There is a difference between preaching the gospel *to* a liberal and preaching the gospel *with* a liberal. The first is within the scope of Biblical evangelism; the second can only be considered ecumenical compromise. We are never to join forces with unbelievers, even for the purpose of winning souls.

God has put a difference between the saved and the unsaved and God demands that this difference be evident and well defined--hence the need for separation. The Word of God delineates this difference as follows: Righteousness/Unrighteousness; Light/Darkness; Christ/Belial; Believer/Infidel; Temple of God/Idols. Between such there can be no fellowship, communion, concord, part or agreement (2 Cor. 6:14-16). The clear line of demarcation between fundamentalism and modernism and between true Christianity and false Christianity must be maintained. Between the two there is a great gulf fixed (Compare Luke 16:26)!

Should we encourage, assist or cooperate with religious leaders who are not sound in the faith?

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, RECEIVE HIM NOT into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John. 10-11).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and AVOID THEM" (Rom. 16:17).

"A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition REJECT" (Tit. 3:10).

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it; FROM SUCH TURN AWAY" (2 Tim. 3:5; cf. "power" in Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18,24).

Should we cooperate with those who preach a "different" gospel? "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED" (Gal. 1:6-9).

"As I besought thee (Timothy) to abide still at Ephesus... that thou mightest charge some that they teach no different doctrine"(1 Tim. 1:3).

To join hands with those who preach a different gospel brings God's curse (Anathema) and not His blessing.

Should false teachers be treated as friends or enemies of the church of Jesus Christ? "shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them who hate the LORD?" (2 Chron. 19:2)

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the **enemies** of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). "For they that are such **serve not our Lord Jesus Christ** but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:18). "But there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ"(Gal. 1:7).

Should the evangelist warn people against unbelief and apostasy in the church?

Because of their failure to warn, the hands of many evangelists are dripping with blood (Ezek. 33:6). Paul was free from the blood of all men, not because he reached every house in Ephesus with a gospel of John, but because he did not shun to declare to the Ephesian believers the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Paul ceased not to warn the flock concerning the grievous wolves who would enter the church from without and who would arise from within (Acts 20:29-32). Many evangelists today find it very unethical and extremely difficult to warn against such wolves who are co-workers in the campaign and co-sitters on the platform! All believers, including evangelists, are commanded to test the spirits because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). The Lord Jesus exposed the error of contemporary religious leaders (Mt. 22:29) and He consistently warned His disciples against false teachers (Mt. 7:15-20; 16:6-12; 24:4-5; Lk. 12:1.15). Not only must the evangelist preach that Christ is "the way," but he must insist that Christ is "the only way" and this necessitates warning against "false ways" that lead to destruction. If warning against false teachers had been deemed unnecessary by God, then Peter would have omitted chapters 2 and 3 of his second book, the seven letters to the Asian churches in Revelation would have been greatly abbreviated, the pastoral epistles would

have been condensed into only a few chapters and the books of 2 John, Jude and Galatians would have been missing from the canon!

Should the evangelist send his converts back into "the church of their choice"?

A common practice among big name evangelists is to send new converts back into "the church of their choice." This harmful practice can be extremely detrimental to a new believer. New converts need to be protected from church leaders who profess to be "Christian" but who deny the fundamental truths of the Word of God. How can a newborn babe in Christ be helped and stabilized in a liberal church environment where the Bible is not believed nor taken seriously? How can little lambs be ruthlessly thrown to the wolves? Should not the new believers be warned concerning Satan's ministers who appear as "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15)?

Instead of being recommended to these churches they need to be seriously warned about these churches. We need to send converts to the "church of God's choice." We need to carefully direct new believers to churches that are Bible-believing, Bible-teaching and Bible-practicing, but how often do you hear a famous evangelist give this kind of specific direction?

What should be our relationship to a Christian brother who is consistently and willfully disobedient to the Apostolic commandments, including 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10; and 2 John 10?

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6; cf. 2:15).

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

Is it LOVING to separate from a disobedient believer according to 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 3:14-15?

Love is obedience to Christ's commands (John 14:21-24; 15:9-10; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:2-3; etc.). Love rejoices in the truth, not in iniquity (1 Cor. 13:6). Love discerns and tests (Phil. 1:9-10). Love maintains a sound doctrinal position (2 Tim. 1:13; cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-5). The most loving thing that can be done to a believer who refuses to submit to God's commandments is to withdraw from him and have no company with him, counting him not as an enemy but admonishing him as a brother!

Should an evangelist be motivated by the philosophy of "Souls at any cost!"?

Though we ought to be willing to sacrifice our very lives for the salvation of the lost, this must never be our supreme motivation. Rather it should be this--"Faithfulness to God and obedience to His Word at any cost!" The Jesuit philosophy that the end justifies the means is an abomination to the Lord (cf. Rom. 3:8; 6:1-2). The Christian athlete must follow the Rule Book if he is to be crowned (2 Tim. 2:5). In 1 Samuel 15 Saul disobeyed God's command (v.3) so that he could "obey God's command" (vs. 20-21). Was God pleased? **"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"** (vs. 22-23).

Must we choose between "preaching the gospel" and "defending the faith"?

Absolutely not! Both are Scriptural imperatives and both are to be performed in God's way! We must preach the gospel among all nations (Lk. 24:47) and we must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The early church did both!

In discerning problems in contemporary evangelism, what should our own attitude be towards lost men?

It is very easy to be critical of others, and to be guilty ourselves! We judge others and condemn ourselves (Rom. 2:1)! We need to have a burdened, burning heart for the LOST! Forbid it that we would be critical of compromising evangelism, while our own hearts are cold and sterile about winning the lost. *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Cor. 9:16).

Is the Great Commission for all believers?

No, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is only for faithful, obedient and worshipping believers!

Should we be concerned with numbers and "statistical success"?

We should be concerned for every person on the face of the earth. We should want what God wants and desire what He desires. God desires all men to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) and we should share this desire. Our greatest joy should be seeing believers walking in truth (3 John 4; 2 John 4). We must ever remember that it is God who is building His church (Matthew 16:18); it is God who adds to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:27); it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-7); and it is God who immerses each and every believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Only God can convict (John 16:8), save (Heb. 7:25), keep (John 10:28) and complete the great work of salvation which He began (Phil. 1:6). Our primary concern should not be upon numbers but upon faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2). Our only motivation should be God's "well done" at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 3-8)!

Should the church resort to cheap and sensational promotional gimmicks to help attract the attention of sinners?

"A kind of a carnival atmosphere pervades some churches today: 'Ride our Sunday School bus. If you do, you may be the lucky one to discover a \$5.00 bill underneath your seat.' One is sickened by the excesses to which some have gone today in their quest for additions to their rolls. It smacks of-the flesh and degrades the gospel. The high and holy message of the cross has been dragged in the dust before the public eye. It is time that Christians everywhere cried, 'Enough!'

This is not to repudiate all promotion. Certainly there is a place for promotion that is in good taste and is honoring to Christ, dignified and effective. The church of Jesus Christ, however, ought not to be made into a three-ring circus. The church that is preaching the Word of God in the power of the Spirit will be able to attract sinners and will see many of hem saved without resorting to cheap and tawdry methods" (Ernest D. Pickering, *The Theology of Evangelism*, Baptist Bible College Press, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, pp. 46-47).

How can God-centered, Christ-honoring and Bible teaching local churches be effective witnesses in our contemporary world?

No better answer can be given than that of Dr. G. Campbell Morgan:

"There is a toleration which is treachery. There is a peace which issues in paralysis. There are hours when the church must say NO to those who should ask communion with her, in the doing of her work, upon the basis of compromise. Such standing aloof may produce ostracism and persecution; but it will maintain power and influence. If the Church of God in the cities of today were aloof from the maxims of the age, separated from the materialistic philosophies of the schools, bearing her witness alone to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the perfection of His salvation, even though persecuted and ostracized and bruised, it would be to her that men would look in the hour of their heartbreak and sorrow and national need. The reason why men do not look to the Church today is that she has destroyed her own influence by compromise.

May our evangelism be God-centered, may our gospel be Christ crucified, may our power be God the Holy Spirit and may the Lord of the harvest be pleased to call out a people for His name and for His glory!

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