

## The Four Greatest Challenges to Evangelism

### INTRODUCTION:

1. I have been asked to preach on the subject and thoughts presented in an article by someone you and I know quite well—Andy Cantrell.
  - A. The thoughts in the article concern, as if I really need to say, the subject of *evangelism*.
  - B. Because his words are true and hit home to me, I thought we all could gain from them.
    - i. We need to hear it because we need much growth in this area of our service to God.
    - ii. That we “need growth” in this area would be evident I think if we tallied up how many people we as individuals have talked to over the past year in serious fashion to **tell them about Jesus** and to seek the salvation of their soul!
    - iii. I would guess, if you are like me, that this number would not be like we would want it.
2. What I want to do today is to...
  - A. Challenge each of us to examine why we don’t do more talking about the Lord to others.
    - i. It is very possible that I just don’t know how much you are doing.
    - ii. But if you are like me, we both know we could do a lot better.
  - B. Is to share some ideas that can help us start speaking up, paying attention to opportunities, speaking boldly, and communicating more clearly than we have previously.
3. To do this I want us to look at *reasons* why Christians struggle when it comes to evangelism.
  - A. There may be countless reasons, but the following four categories likely cover most of them.
  - B. Christians struggle because of issues with *care, consciousness, courage, and craft*.
    - i. Most of the excuses we are willing to vocalize come from the last three areas, being willing to admit we need to be more **conscious** of opportunities, to have more **courage** to speak up, and that we need to hone our **craft**, or skills, in evangelism.
    - ii. It is rare to hear one admit the most common reason we don’t share Christ like we should, which is our lack of **care**—that we just don’t **care** about God’s work and souls as we should.
4. Let’s look at these four issues individually to learn some things that we can work on and grow.

### BODY:

#### **I. CARE—Growing a heart of compassion for the lost**

- A. Being Jesus’ disciples means following him in *action* and in *heart*.
  1. To follow Jesus is to be *compassionate* toward the lost (Mk. 6:34 – “And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.”).
  2. To follow Jesus is to desire to save all people, even the worse of sinners.
    - a. In Luke 19:9-10 Jesus showed unheard of compassion to a most despised sinner, a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus, when He came to Zacchaeus’ home and “...said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; <sup>10</sup> for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
    - b. Jesus’ disciples struggled to learn God’s love/mercy toward sinners, especially those who didn’t receive Jesus (Lk. 9:54-56 – “And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” <sup>55</sup> But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. <sup>56</sup> For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.”).
      - i. I know that some of your translations stop after Jesus *rebuking* them.
      - ii. But He *rebuked* them for such thinking, being contrary to Christ’s purpose (Jn. 3:17 – “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”).

- B. Honesty with ourselves and God will cause us to admit that we are failing in most cases to learn that same love and mercy toward the lost!
1. I think we get so busy with our lives and what *we are doing* that we fail to care enough about what God is doing in the universe to get involved in His business.
    - a. The most important thing God is doing in the universe involves saving souls (John 3:16 – “For God **so loved the world** that He **gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish** but have everlasting life.”).
    - b. We can make excuses, but isn’t the real source of our lack of *consciousness*, our missing *courage*, and our unrefined *craft* that **we do not care** as we should?
      - i. When we truly care about something, we make the effort to learn about it that we might treat it properly and do what is best in connection with it!
      - ii. If we care enough about God and those made in His image, we will become more *conscious* of opportunities, and find the *courage* to speak up for Christ as we should!
  2. So, how can we develop greater care?
    - a. True sacrifice and service come from a realization of God’s mercy and love toward me.
      - i. This is our motivation for complete sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1 – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, **by the mercies of God**, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”).
      - ii. God’s love/mercies toward us are **great** (Tit. 3:3-7 – “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the **kindness** and the **love** of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but **according to His mercy He saved us**, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”).
      - iii. As John says, “We love Him because **He first loved us**” (1 Jn.4:19).
    - b. But, for that knowledge and appreciation to grow I must...
      - i. Choose to think more intensely about God’s love and mercy offered me and thank Him more frequently for His loving kindness.
      - ii. Enthusiastically engage my heart and mind in listening to God’s word with probing meditation on His instructions designed to train me to love Him and those He loves!
      - iii. These are activities we participate in frequently. The problem is that we forget that *going through the motions* was designed by God *to stir our emotions*.
      - iv. Our worship and our study of the Scriptures are designed to change us by helping us see God and become more like Him in compassion, mercy, and love.

## II. CONSCIOUS – Caring enough to look for opportunities to share Jesus

- A. Jesus had to train His disciples to be conscious of opportunities.
1. I am sure it was as hard for them to view their fellow Jew as *lost*, as it is for us today.
    - a. Jesus’ words in Matt. 10:37 that “The harvest is **plentiful**, but the workers are few” surely would have been as uncommon a viewpoint then as it is now.
    - b. After Paul had been severely opposed by the Jews in Corinth it was likely shocking to him when the Lord revealed, “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10).
    - c. The **key** to these revelations was that these disciples had to **care** enough about God’s *harvest* and His *people* to do the work of sharing the gospel of Christ.
- B. How do we heighten our consciousness?
1. We must appreciate our role as ambassadors for Christ (Col. 4:5-6 – “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always

be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” – NASB).

2. We must be devoted to prayer with thanksgiving concerning our role as ambassadors (Col. 4:2-4 – “Devote yourselves to **prayer**, keeping alert in it with an attitude of **thanksgiving**; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”).
  - a. An evangelistic minded heart comes from *prayers of thanks* to God.
    - i. It must be our habit to pray earnestly for opportunities to speak of Jesus!
    - ii. Our evangelistic efforts will *never be any more successful than we are thankful!*
  - b. Also, an evangelistic mindset is grown in praying for the efforts of *one another* and others to speak boldly in sharing the gospel of Christ with the lost.
3. We must recognize that every *heart* is soil in which the gospel must be planted. The parable of the sower in Mt. 13 and Lk. 8 finds the seed sown in **every kind of heart**.
4. With this in mind we must recognize that every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives contains the seeds of truth that can be planted in the lives of those around us (Gal. 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”).
  - a. We must be *mindful* of what God has done for us and what it must *produce* in our lives—the outward expression of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
  - b. Once we realize this and meditate on it, every person, interaction, word, and deed become an opportunity for us.

### III. COURAGE – Faith to put our care and consciousness into action

- A. Most of the things we are afraid of, or at least I am afraid of, concerning evangelism are selfish and embarrassing if we think about it.
  1. I am afraid others will no longer like me, or that I will be excluded, or that I will embarrass myself, or stick my foot in my mouth, etc.
    - a. These things are all about *me* and *my comfort*.
    - b. And, I don’t think Jesus presented an example that showed concern for these things.
  2. We may feel much better about confessing other things we are afraid of because they may *genuinely result from our concern for the other person*.
    - a. We worry that we might push them away, ruin an opportunity, say something wrong, or not actually help them.
    - b. There may be some validity to these fears, but only if we fail to get one of two things demanded of us right, which according to Ephesians 4:15 is to “speak the **truth in love**.”
      - i. If I speak the truth but am not motivated by love, it will do no good for me and could potentially hurt the one I seek to help.
      - ii. If I love but fail to speak the truth, it does no good for them.
      - iii. If I will keep this as my goal, it frees me from so much concern, seeing that as long as I love them and speak what I know to be true, God is pleased, they can be helped, and I have nothing to be afraid of!
- B. How do we obtain courage?
  1. As with Eph. 4:15, we must listen to and believe God’s word and its encouragement.
  2. God does not expect or need for us to speak of things we don’t know!
    - a. Jesus told a man who knew very little to, “report...what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you” (Mk.5:19).

- b. God can accomplish His purposes with the truth that He has already taught me, even if I have so much more truth to learn.
- c. If we are aware and thankful for God’s grace and mercy shown to us, along with the great blessings we have in Christ, we have something to say!
- 3. In Acts 4:20 this same principle is taught when Peter and John said, “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”
  - a. How encouraging that we are not expected to speak of things we haven’t seen or heard.
  - b. So, we need to look closer at our fears and realize that if you have heard enough truth to gain faith, then what you have heard is enough to help another find faith.
  - c. If we are willing to speak only what we know to be true, and refrain from speaking of things we don’t know, we have nothing to fear.
  - d. And, God’s truth is powerful enough to help another through our “small” efforts.

#### **IV. CRAFT – Skills obtained through dedication and determination to save souls**

- A. God is the perfect craftsman in all He says and does.
  - 1. His way is perfect (Psa. 18:30 – “As for God, **His way is perfect**; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”).
  - 2. As Psa. 19:7a says, “The **law of the Lord is perfect**, restoring the soul...”
- B. As *children* and *followers* of God, we should be driven to perfect the craft of our Father.
  - 1. As the Psalm 19 points out, our craft is honed by a *dedication to God’s word* (Psa. 19:7b-8 – “The testimony of the Lord is sure, **making wise the simple**.<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, **enlightening the eyes**.”).
    - a. If we want skill, or wisdom, in saving the lost, it is not found in some fool-proof system one can implement, in some seminar we can attend.
    - b. It is found in a love for God, His word, and the souls He has created.
    - c. This will drive us to be students of Jesus’ words in various situations, making them our words to the world to bring life and hope to all who hear us.
  - 2. To grow in our craft, we must *honestly examine our efforts* while not losing heart. An honest critique of what I said, how I listened, etc., especially of those efforts that appear to produce little fruit or go badly, may cause pain or remorse, but will help us learn and do better.

#### CONCLUSION:

- 1. So, the means of effectively share Jesus with others is found in our willingness to **grow** in our **care** for souls, in our **consciousness** of opportunities, in our **courage** to take advantage of these opportunities, and in our **craft** to make the best of those opportunities.
- 2. No one can make that happen in your life but you. It is up to you and you and I will be as successful as you and I are dedicated, and as dedicated as you and I are thankful for God’s divine grace and mercy and love in our lives to save us wretched sinners from eternal condemnation.
- 3. We can surely grow much more and do much more for the Lord in sharing Christ if we will put our minds and hearts to it.