

EVANGELISM LESSONS FROM LUKE

May 2024



PA BIBLE
TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

*Facing a task unfinished that drives us to our knees,
A need that, undiminished, rebukes our slothful ease,
We who rejoice to know Thee renew before Thy throne
The solemn pledge we owe Thee to go and make Thee known.*

Facing a Task Unfinished – Frank Houghton, 1930

Why Evangelism?

Luke 24:45-48 ESV –

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that **repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are **witnesses** of these things."

- "Facing a Task Unfinished" – the Great Commission as our vision/purpose
- As followers of Christ, we are called to obey his clear commands to speak the gospel to every corner of the earth and make disciples of every nation.
- "Evangelism" – speaking about the good news; heralding; proclaiming a message of good news
- However, some of us have had poor examples of what gospel outreach looks like. Some of us don't want to go door-to-door with Bible tracts, and some of us may have jobs where speaking the gospel is directly or indirectly frowned upon.
 - **We want to learn from Scriptures what gospel-shaped lives look like in sharing the good news, and we want to take encouragement that this call to be a part of the Great Commission is for all of us – no exceptions.**
 - **Building a healthy framework for evangelism will help us be useful for God's kingdom and His purposes, especially in a "post-Christian world."**
- A gospel-living church is a gospel-sharing church – and helps us from becoming self-centered and self-righteous. It "rebukes our slothful ease."

Pentecost – the kickoff to the Great Commission

Acts 1:8 ESV –

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- Equipped and empowered by the spirit, the commandment was to be witnesses of Jesus to the ends of the earth – even places like Lemoyne, PA!
- "I am with you always unto the ends of the earth..." – it was better for Jesus to go away (ascend into heaven) and send the Comforter than even to be with them. We have been transformed by the work of Christ and the power of the holy spirit to be those that bring light and life to a dark and dying world.
- "Commission to mission" – It was Christ's purpose that the Gospel should go to all the nations, but it was the holy spirit's power that would make this possible. The evangelization of the world, in short, is a work of God's Spirit through His church.

Christ's Compassion for the Lost and Straying

Grow in developing a heart for the lost by understanding Jesus' compassion.

It is on the backdrop of Luke 15 that we see three examples of how the gospel is for those that are broken, lost, straying, and perishing. Growth in evangelizing the lost starts with the constant reminder that we were lost and now we are found!

Sustained, successful, and fruitful evangelism starts with maintaining this gospel truth in our own lives.

Luke 15:1-2 ESV

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

Luke 15:3-5 ESV - 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

- **Emphasis on Jesus' willingness to seek and save the lost** – too weak to return to the fold on its own, the good shepherd leaves the 99 to track down the lost one, carrying it back to safety.
- **More joy in heaven over one sinner who repents!** This work of evangelism is fundamentally about the "one" individual – never forget the importance to God over one sinner who repents.
 - **Your labor is not in vain!**

The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

- "...there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents..."

Luke 15:11-24 – The Lost Son

- Focus on God's forgiveness and joy over the return of the lost
- The miracle each day of "I once was lost, but now I'm found."

Application

- ***The foundation for evangelism will be desiring to grow in having a burden for those that are lost.***
- We are encouraged to be diligent and persistent in evangelism, recognizing the worth of every soul
- Developing a heart for the lost involves understanding the effort God puts into finding each person

If we lose the appreciation of the gospel of Christ – he loved us when we were enemies of God, separated by sin, lost and straying from the fold – then we will find it almost impossible to have any true and sustained energy to reach the lost sinners in the world through evangelism.

- First step – preach the gospel to yourself every day. Never forget that it was an unequivocal miracle of miracles that **THAT** have been saved by grace.
- When the compassion of Christ for us is embedded deeply in our hearts, it will be burning brightly in our souls for the lost of this world.

Reflection questions

- How can we cultivate a deeper compassion for the lost in our daily lives?
- What are some practical ways we can seek out and help those who are spiritually lost?

Jesus' Message: The Kingdom of God

Understand and communicate the central message of Jesus' ministry: the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:43 ESV –

43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; **for I was sent for this purpose.**"

Jesus' Inaugural Sermon (Luke 4:16-21)

- Jesus reads from Isaiah in the synagogue
- Proclaims the fulfillment of the prophecy and the advent of the kingdom of God

The Parables of the Kingdom (Luke 8:4-15, Luke 13:18-21)

- Parable of the Sower: the reception of the kingdom message
- **Luke 13:18-19** – Parable of the Mustard Seed and Yeast: growth and influence of the kingdom
 - "He said therefore, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.'"

Acts 1:3 ESV – He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the **kingdom of God**.

Acts 8:12 ESV - But when they believed Philip as he preached **good news about the kingdom of God** and the name of **Jesus Christ**, they were baptized, both men and women.

The gospel message is for everyone

Acts 10:34-35 (ESV): "So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that **God shows no partiality**, but in **every nation** anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'"

We do not preach a religion. We are not selling a program. We aren't even promoting our specific church. We preach Christ. Our motivations must first and foremost be about preaching him and him alone.

Who does what: We preach Christ, God opens blind eyes

"It is no exaggeration to say that our understanding of regeneration will determine our view of conversion and our methodology in evangelism."

1. Trust God to open hearts – "who does what"
 - a. We preach Christ, God opens blind eyes
 - b. We reach ears, He reaches hearts
2. **Luke 8:4-15** – The Sower and the seed
 - a. Different responses and receptivity to the gospel message
 - b. Understand the challenges and distractions that can hinder spiritual growth
 - c. Sowing the seed in truth and love – we are the farmer sowing the seed, tending to the soil – but it is only God that can make a beautiful, flourishing plant grow from that seed.

The success of our evangelistic efforts does not rest upon a program or a class, a “sales strategy” or a sleek, polished marketing campaign. No amount of arm-twisting or brilliant theological reasoning can bring a heart to a place of true salvation. The success of our efforts comes from understanding “who does what,” and trusting that as we are faithful to share the truth in love, God is the one who opens hearts to Christ.

Jesus Equipping the Disciples to Share the Gospel

The Sending of the Twelve/ The Sending of the Seventy-Two

Luke 9:1-6, ESV

"And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.' And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

Luke 10:2-3 ESV - 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

While these situations were specific to the twelve and seventy-two with regards to the instructions, there are some overarching lessons and learning that we can take from these examples.

- Recognize the authority and power given by Christ for evangelism
- There is a corporate aspect to this – together, collectively there is unity in purpose, comradery in the mission.
- Embrace simplicity and dependence on God in ministry efforts
- Understand that rejection is part of the mission and respond with grace
- Instructions: prayer for more laborers
- The message: the kingdom of God has come to earth in Jesus, and will be soon be revealed again

The Parable of the Mustard Seed and Yeast

Luke 13:18-21

"He said therefore, 'What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.' And again he said, 'To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.'"

- The mustard seed - humble beginnings but significant growth
- The yeast – seemingly imperceptible, but pervasive influence and transformation
- **The kingdom of God starts small but grows and impacts everything**

Reflection questions

- How can we practically prepare ourselves to share the gospel in our daily lives?
- How can we support and encourage one another in our evangelistic efforts?

Everyday Evangelism

Be a light to the world

Luke 8:16 (ESV): "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light."

- Do not think little of your station in life!

Build relationships (and sharing meals!)

Luke 5:29-32 (ESV): "And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

Acts of compassion

Luke 10:30-37 (ESV): The Parable of the Good Samaritan

- Jesus is answering the question, "Who is my neighbor?"
 - This question is essentially asking, "What are the parameters of the love that I have to show? What is the minimum amount that is acceptable? Tell me who are the people that I am not obligated to love."
 - **Jesus' response is confronting because it shows it's not about religious pedigree that matters to God, it's the one who shows mercy is the one that is obeying the law.**

Sowing and reaping - two necessary functions for harvesting

- Praying for laborers for the harvest
 - **Luke 10:2-3 ESV** - 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
- The importance of a healthy church – "Come and see..."

Common Challenges to Evangelism and Overcoming Them

Overcoming Fear and Passivity

It's not easy for many of us to open up conversations about God with non-Christians. We are quite used to the idea that two things shouldn't be brought up in polite conversation: religion and politics. Engaging with people is one of the first things that we can do in our efforts of "everyday evangelism" that sets the table for sharing the gospel.

1. Love people (*imago dei*)
2. Serve people
3. Ask questions (easy), ask questions ("cross the pain threshold")
4. "Come and see," / Go back to #1

Some common challenges we face:

1. Fear and intimidation

For most of us today, sharing the gospel isn't risking corporal punishment or prison. Still, there is an intimidation that comes from sharing the Word of God that is places the gospel as 1) absolute truth; 2) exclusive; and 3) confronting.

Acts 4:18-20 ESV –

18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for **we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.**"

2. Lack of knowledge

"Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

1 Corinthians 1:17-24 ESV - 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- Weakness of the evangel (good news)
- Weakness of the evangelizer
- Weakness of the evangelized

Our message is not one that the world considers to be strong, wise, or powerful. Our aim is not to impress our hearers with eloquent words of wisdom. We know that we ourselves are simply jars of clay within which we hold the greatest treasure of all time – and we know the people we are trying to reach are lost and perishing.

For those that hears this message and whose hearts receive it, our good news is the power of God to save those even unto the uttermost.

Acts 4:13 ESV

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. **And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.**

- 3. Feeling of rejection ("being the bad guys)**
- 4. Cultural sensitivities**

Practical ways to encourage evangelism in our lives

Come and see / Go and tell

- 1. Service** – Look for ways to serve and meet the needs of others, reflecting Christ's love in action
- 2. Make it personal** – develop a simple, authentic way to share how the gospel of Christ powerfully transformed you.
 - a. In our small group last year we workshopped our own personal testimonies – simple, short, powerful, ways to communicate the message of the gospel and how it transformed our

lives. Do not undercut your personal experience! Even if you've been a Christian from before you can remember, it is a miracle of miracles that you are saved – tell them about the power of Christ!

3. **Pray for boldness and opportunities** - Consistently pray for a compassionate heart and for opportunities to reach the lost
4. **Preparing our lives and hearts (1 Peter 3)**
 - a. "Being prepared to make a defense..." - *preparing for battle*
 - b. "...yet do it with gentleness and respect..." - *how we engage*
5. **Pre-evangelism**
 - a. Not every interaction with a Christian needs to start with Romans 10:9 and an invite to church. Find ways to interact with people outside your typical social circles – many people who come from radically different backgrounds will be more likely to receive what you have to say when they know that you care.
 - b. Example: Hindi culture and their perceptions of American culture.
6. **Remember the eternal perspective**
 - a. Souls are in the balance – they will be eternally thankful for you sharing the gospel!
7. **Invite them – “Come and see!”**

Workshop activity

Simple and actionable ways we can start right now...

Think of three people that do not know the gospel, that are likely unsaved, that may not know the gospel of Christ – let's take one minute to pray for them.

- Will you commit to pray for their hearts to be opened to the gospel? If you do not pray for their salvation, are you confident that others are praying each day for them?

What are three *very simple and actionable* ways to engage with them this month.

- A simple phone call, text, or visit
- Inviting a neighbor over for a simple meal
- An act of service or everyday kindness that may help them.

Further reflection

- How can we practically prepare ourselves to share the gospel in our daily lives?
- What challenges do we face in evangelism, and how can we overcome them with the encouragement of Scripture, of Jesus' example/instructions?
- How can we support and encourage one another in our evangelistic efforts?
- How does a church play a crucial role in evangelistic efforts?
- How much time do I spend with Christians vs. non-Christians?
- How can we “pray bigger” for our West Shore community in terms of reaching the unsaved?
- How can your small group start to be more involved in learning to grow in evangelism?