

1 Peter 3:15 “Getting Ready for Evangelism: Some Practical Steps”

Are you ready? Those three words that form this one question are going to be the focus of our time together. Are you ready? You say, "Ready for what?" Are you ready for what 1 Peter 3:15 says? It reads, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and *be ready* always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Are you ready to talk to people about Christ? Are you ready to share the gospel with those who are without hope in this world? Are you ready to witness to your neighbor and tell him or her the good news of Jesus Christ? Are you ready to do the work of evangelism?

Someone might be thinking, "But I'm not an evangelist." No, God gifts certain individuals to do the work of an evangelist, but He commands all of us to do the work of evangelism.

Are you ready to get involved in evangelism? Perhaps you're wondering, "How do I get ready?" That's the question we're going to address this evening. My aim is to provide you with practical preparation for evangelism.

Last Week: A look at 1 Corinthians 3:6...

We saw that evangelism involves three things, based on Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 3:6...

a. Evangelism involves *planting*.

We sought to answer the questions, "What did *planting* mean for Paul? What did Paul do while in Corinth that he called *planting*?" Here's what we see Paul doing in Corinth in Acts 18:

1. *Making contacts with unsaved people (4)*
2. *Telling them about Christ (5)*
3. *Encouraging people to believe in Christ, be baptized, and to follow Christ (8)*
4. *Teaching people the Word of God (11)*

God's Word is like seed. The hearts of people are like soil. The objective is to put the Word into the hearts of people.

Observation: The approach that many today take in evangelism is to try and expose *many* people with *a little truth about Jesus*. In other words, they try to simplify the Word of God to a "canned approach" and then give that to as many as possible.

Principle: We need to follow the approach Paul modeled in Corinth and other places, that is, to expose the people God gives you (even if it's *a few people*) with *as much of the truth* as you can. Paul said he spent 18 months in Corinth "teaching them the word of God" (Acts 18:11).

b. Evangelism involves *watering*.

That's what Apollos did, according to Paul, so we retraced the footsteps of Apollos in Acts 18-19 to see what he did that qualified as *watering*.

1. *A thorough knowledge of Scripture (24)*
2. *A zeal and willingness to speak out about Christ (25)*
3. *Able to use the Bible to address objections non-Christians have about Christ (28)*
4. *Involves building on what others have done in order to help new Christians grow (19:1)*

c. Evangelism involves *letting God cause the seed to grow*.

We discussed the importance of remembering that salvation is a work that God alone can do. We cautioned about the danger of picking green fruit. We must pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to do His work of conviction and regeneration.

New Material: From 1 Peter 3:15...

Key: Three things need to be prepared if we are going to be effective in evangelism. To use the farming metaphor, preparation involves the farmer, the seed, and the soil. Or to use the fishing analogy, preparation involves the fisherman, the fish, and the net. To be ready to do evangelism, then, you must:

1. Prepare your life.
2. Prepare your message.
3. Prepare their hearts.

1. Prepare your life.

That's what we learned some time ago in our study in Titus. To be prepared for evangelism, as Paul explained for Titus, a church must have three things: Godly leaders, a godly congregation, and a godly reputation in the world.

Preparing our lives is a given for effective outreach. God works through holy vessels. Lifestyle matters. Indeed, lifestyle is so powerful that it communicates more loudly than clearly than a dozen voices. That's what Peter had in mind in 1 Peter 3:15. Unsaved people should *see* a difference in our lives, and what they see will prompt them to ask questions. Questions like, "What makes you different? How is it that you exhibit hope in your life?"

Your lifestyle is a powerful, evangelistic tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit. V 16 elaborates, "Having a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your *good manner of life* in Christ."

So if you want to be effective in evangelism, prepare your life. Make sure there's nothing in your life that would hinder a non-Christian from coming to Christ. No inconsistencies, no loopholes, no hypocrisy. Determine to let people see Christ in you.

Having said that, listen carefully. It takes more than a lifestyle to lead a person to Christ. An unsaved person may *see* a difference in you, but he needs to *hear* what the difference is. Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses unto Me (Acts 1:8)." And, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mk 16:15)." Evangelism involves telling. Verbal proclamation. Being ready involves a second area.

2. Prepare your message.

Our primary emphasis this evening will be on this second area. The fact is this. Many Christians flounder when it comes to evangelism because they have not prepared their message. Oh, they are saved and they know the Lord that saved them, but they do not know how to tell others how to enter into a relationship with the Lord.

If your neighbor knocked on your door tonight and said, "I've got to have what you've got," are you ready? Do you know what you would say to him or her?

Some of you have friends at work or school that need Christ, and you are burdened for them. You've been praying for them. You've been waiting for an opportunity to witness to them. But are you ready?

The reason some Christians don't get involved in evangelism is because they lack confidence, and the reason they lack confidence is because they don't have a prepared message. When we witness, it's helpful to have a game plan in mind.

To help us prepare our message, we're going to do some on the job training tonight. We're going to explain some practical tools that you can use in presenting the message of the gospel. I don't intend to give you a one-size-fits-all, canned program, for in evangelism we must work with people where they are. But having a basic plan lodged in your mind can give you great confidence as you interact with the lost.

Tool #1: Two Diagnostic Questions

One of the most difficult aspects of evangelism is turning the conversation to spiritual matters. How do you break the ice and move the discussion from the weather to the gospel? Obviously, we must be very sensitive to the working and leading of the Holy Spirit. We must pray. We can also ask questions.

When you go to a doctor for a physical checkup, what does he do? He asks diagnostic questions. When you're trying to do a spiritual checkup on a person, it's helpful to do the same thing. Use diagnostic questions.

Like this. "Bob, we've been neighbors for a year now, and have gotten to know each other pretty well. I really value you and your friendship. Would you mind if I ask you a question that is of great concern to me?"

Question #1: "If you died tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?"

What are the possible answers? There are really only two. Either "yes" or "no" (an "I'm not sure" is really not much different than a "no").

If your neighbor says, "No, I guess I don't know for sure," then what do you say? Remember, be natural. What would the natural follow-up question be if he says he's not sure he's going to heaven? Simply, "Would you like to know what the Bible says about how you can be sure you're going to heaven?"

If he is interested, then you can proceed to share the message of the gospel (which we'll detail later). If he says he is not interested, thank him for his honesty. Keep praying for him and cultivating a relationship with him.

What if his answer is, "Oh yes, I know I'm going to heaven"? Does that mean he is genuinely saved? Maybe. Maybe not. Perhaps he believes he's going to heaven because he's a good person. The following diagnostic question will reveal the object of his faith.

Question #2: "If you died and were standing before the gates of heaven, and God said to you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' what would you say to Him?"

What is the correct, biblical answer to this question? The answer is, "I am unworthy of entering heaven for I am a sinner. Yet by your grace, I believe that Jesus Christ has saved me from my sin by dying on the cross and conquering death. He is my righteousness."

What are some answers that would raise "red flags" indicating the person does not understand that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?

"The good in my life outweighs the bad."

"I joined the church when I was 12 and have been faithfully involved since then."

"I was baptized in the church."

"I'm not perfect, but I've lived a basically good, decent life."

How would you respond to such claims? What do these statements indicate about the person's faith? He has faith in the church, or faith in his works, or even faith in his faith. Does that type of faith save a person? No. Faith is only as good as its object.

So how you help a person who wrongly believes he's going to heaven? He needs to see the contradiction between what he believes and what the Bible teaches. Here's a statement that will confront the contradiction, "You say you're not perfect. Did you realize the Bible says that God requires perfection in order to enter His presence in heaven?" That question moves the discussion out of the realm of our opinions, to what God says. No matter how he answers that follow-up question, now you've caused him to focus on what the Bible says.

Tool #2: Your Testimony

Perhaps your greatest asset in evangelism is your personal testimony of how you became a Christian. An unsaved person cannot argue with your testimony, for you are merely sharing what happened in your life. If you are a Christian, you have a testimony. Your testimony is simply your story of how Jesus Christ has changed your life.

When sharing it with an unsaved person, keep in mind a few guidelines. Keep it brief (one to three minutes). Avoid religious jargon ("I was washed in the blood," etc). Don't be preachy. Use your testimony as a means to spark interest in your friend's mind so he wants to know more (the content of this testimony will differ from one you share in church). Include the following basics:

1. Before: What was happening in my life before I became a Christian?
2. How: How did I become a Christian?
3. After: How has my life changed since I became a Christian?

To do: Read Paul's testimony in Acts 26

To do: Have someone share their testimony

Suppose God uses your testimony to create interest in your friend's heart, and he responds, "So that's what happened to you, huh? I've sure been searching for something. How can I have what you've got?" What should you do next? Share the gospel with him.

The next two tools are designed to help you present the essential ingredients of the gospel message. No one method is infallible, and these two are certainly not the only ones. The more familiar you are with a method, the more confidence you will have to adapt that method to the specific conversation.

Tool #3 The Romans Road

A popular, simple gospel presentation is the "Romans Road."

To do: Have someone present the Romans Road illustration.

Tool #4: The Bridge Illustration

The Bridge Illustration can take from 3 minutes to 30 minutes to share, depending on how thoroughly you explain it. The benefits of it are: it's visual (I've written on paper, napkins, backs of place-mats); it's simple and clear; it gives the person something to keep and think about; it encourages the person to get into the Scriptures and to check out for himself whether what he's heard is true.

How do you get the opportunity to share it with a person? The key is this. Ask for permission. If they said, "No, I don't know for sure that I'd go to heaven if I died," then ask them, "Would you like me to show you a brief, simple diagram of what the Bible has to say about how you can know?"

To do: Have someone share the illustration, using the overhead.

Key Verses to memorize and utilize in the presentation:

Genesis 1:1

John 10:10

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Hebrews 9:27

Titus 3:5

John 14:6

Romans 5:8

John 5:24

3. Prepare their hearts.

How do we prepare the hearts of unsaved people? How do we cultivate the soil? Joe Aldrich has pointed out that evangelism is like a song. A song includes both the lyrics and the music. Evangelism involves both the music and the lyrics.

First of all, we must love unsaved people and live a consistent, Christ-like life before them. That's the music. But we must also share the lyrics of the gospel with them.

Then what? After we've shared the gospel, what else can we do? How can we touch their hearts? Primarily, through prayer.

Let's spend time praying for the lost.

--Personal time of silent prayer (write names on a card) --Pray in small groups