

1 Corinthians 3:6 "How to Lead Someone to Christ"

Introduction: A skit with two people designed to show how intimidating personal evangelism can be (2 minutes)

Personal evangelism is intimidating to many Christians. We feel uncomfortable, unprepared often. We wonder if we'll get ourselves into a jam. Many have opted out with the excuse, "I'm just not gifted to do evangelism. I'm no evangelist." The problem with that conclusion is that it smacks in the face of God. It implies that God commands us to do something He has not equipped us to do. Jesus' words could not be clearer, "You shall be witnesses unto Me (Acts 1:8)."

But many Christians do want to please the Savior, and do want to do evangelism. They just feel unsure of how to do it. If that's you, tonight's service (and next week's) is intended to help you.

In the past, I've challenged you to write down 3 names of unsaved people that you would pray for and seek to reach for Christ. I want take the next step now. How are we going to reach these people for Christ? Assuming you have people for whom the Spirit has burdened you, how are you going to reach them? How do you lead a friend to Christ? How do you do evangelism?

We find helpful guidance in 1 Corinthians 3:6. God's Word uses a farming analogy to illustrate the process of evangelism. Reaching people for Christ is like a farmer planting seed and then harvesting a crop.

The Context:

Paul wrote this letter to his Christian friends in the church in Corinth . The context of chapter 3 is one in which Paul addresses a serious problem. There were divisions in the church. What kind of divisions? The Christians possessed divided loyalties.

Some liked Paul, some liked Apollos, and others had still other favorites. "But why?" you ask. Well, Paul was an evangelist and church planter, and as such was the person who led many of the Corinthians to Christ. But Apollos was a brilliant orator and apologist, and no doubt had used his God-given abilities to lead others to Christ. What God intended to be a complement, the Corinthians turned into a rivalry.

To clear up the confusion, Paul taught the Corinthians in chapter 3 that evangelism and disciple-making involves teamwork. Notice verses 5-9, "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed. Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

Evangelism involves teamwork.

You say, "That's great, but how will that help me to reach my friend for Christ?" As we look at verse 6, we learn that we need to view evangelism as a team-oriented process. It involves, according to Paul, three steps. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

Step #1: Evangelism involves Planting.

Paul said, "I planted." What's involved in planting? How can we get involved in planting the seed of God's Word in the lives of our unsaved friends? Let's see how Paul did it in Corinth . Luke gives us the record in Acts 18.

What's involved in Planting? (see Acts 18)

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul said he "planted." In Acts 18 Luke shows us how Paul did it. Planting involves:

1. Making contacts with unsaved people (4)

In Paul's case, he made contacts by going to where the people were, the synagogue (4). "Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."

2. Telling them about Christ (5)

Planting is more than inviting people to church, for the mere invitation won't save a lost person. Only Christ can do that, and planting is telling people about Christ. As Paul did in verse 5—"Paul devoted himself to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ."

When Paul did evangelism with Jews he did so with an assumption. The Jews knew about the Christ (Messiah). What they didn't know was that Jesus was the Christ.

But when Paul evangelized non-Jews he didn't make the same assumption. To tell a Gentile that Jesus is the Christ means very little for a Gentile who doesn't know what *Christ* means.

Note the response Paul received from his Jewish audience in verse 6, "But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'"

3. Encouraging people to believe in Christ, be baptized, and to follow Christ (8)

Verse 8 tells us what happened as the result of Paul's ministry in the house of Titius, "...Many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

4. Teaching people the Word of God (11)

Paul invested one and one-half years teaching the people in Corinth the Word of God. He encouraged the new Christians to knit together, to develop a sense of accountability to one another, to meet together regularly so they could learn God's Word.

That's planting--making contacts with unsaved people, telling them about Christ, encouraging them to believe in Christ, be baptized, and follow Christ, and making sure they become part of a local assembly where they can be taught the Word of God.

We'll talk in a moment about how we can do planting.

Step #2: Evangelism involves Watering.

According to Paul, "Apollos watered." Apollos was a Jewish Christian from Alexandria , a man who was very learned in the Scriptures. How did Apollos water? Let's look for insights in Acts.

What's involved in Watering? (see Acts 18)

Apollos built on the foundation Paul built. He went to Ephesus (18:24), later to Achaia (18:27), and then to Corinth (19:1). From his example we learn that watering involves:

1. A thorough knowledge of Scripture (24)

"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria , came to Ephesus . He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures." A prerequisite for watering is knowing the Word of God. We can't give to others what we do not possess ourselves.

2. A zeal and willingness to speak out about Christ (25)

Concerning Apollos we're told, "...he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately..." The issue in evangelism is *Christ*. Telling your unsaved friend about your Sunday School class, or talking about how the Bible can help him have better family relationships may be helpful, but that won't save your friend. He needs to hear about Christ.

3. Able to use the Bible to address objections non-Christians have about Christ (28)

When we do evangelism, we will discover that unsaved people have hangups that are clouding the issue of their need for Christ. These roadblocks and barriers need to be addressed. That's what Apollos did, according to verse 28, "For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

By the way, note the basis by which a person believes in Christ. In verse 27 Luke specifies, "Those who *by grace* had believed." As we do evangelism we do so in absolute dependence upon God to work on the basis of His grace in the hearts of lost people.

4. Involves building on what others have done in order to help new Christians grow (19:1)

Acts 19:1 informs us that Apollos stayed on in Corinth after Paul left to minister in Ephesus . Why did he stay? To continue the work Paul had begun. Did he duplicate Paul's efforts? No, he complemented them and advanced them using his own God-given abilities.

Apollos *watered*. If we are to do watering, we must possess a solid knowledge of Scripture, a willingness to speak up for Christ, be a team-player, and have the ability to handle the objections raised by non-Christians. The latter is technically called "Apologetics," the ability to give a verbal defense for the Christian faith.

Let this sink in. If we've been saved very long, we should have a solid grasp of the Scriptures and basic apologetics. You may object, "But I'm no Apollos!" Relax! The truth is, Paul was no Apollos either, and Apollos was no Paul! They were gifted differently. But they complemented each other with their differences as they sought to reach the lost in Corinth . Paul preached the gospel. Apollos addressed the intellectual objections of the skeptics.

Evangelism is a team effort.

When it comes to evangelism, relax and be natural. Use your gifts. If you're trying to reach an unsaved friend and you've hit a barrier, find someone else in the church that has the gifts necessary to help you minister to your friend.

We find an interesting note about Apollos in Titus 3:13. In writing to Titus, Paul told him, "Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need." You may not be able to speak like an Apollos, but you can have a part in making it possible for an Apollos to speak! How? According to Titus 3:14, our good works provide a platform for evangelism, and our gifts and support make it possible for gifted men like Apollos to minister.

Evangelism involves planting, watering, and thirdly...

Step #3: Evangelism involves Letting God cause the seed to grow.

Paul stated, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

What's involved in Letting God make it grow?

1. *We must realize that salvation is of the Lord.*

We can't save someone any more than we can cause seed to grow. We can't cause our unsaved friends to be born again. As Jesus said in John 3:8 "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

That being the case here is a very implication...

2. *We must refuse to pick green fruit.*

We must never try to manufacture "results" in evangelism. That's up to God alone. Unfortunately, the pressure from other Christians often encourages this.

I talked with a man once who criticized my approach to evangelism. He said, "You need to prime the pump to get people saved. You need to work through their emotions to get to their volition. You need to use music to get people to come forward after the message to get people to come to Christ."

I do not doubt the sincerity of this man, nor of his intense burden to see the lost come to Christ. But is his notion consistent with Scripture?

Should we call people to respond to the gospel? Yes. Should we even urge them to repent and believe in Christ? Yes. Should we solemnly warn them of the danger of rejecting Christ? Yes. Should we manipulate their emotions to get them to make a decision for Christ? No.

Why not? Our aim is not to get a decision. Our aim is to make a disciple. I can use a tear-jerking story about the horror of hell and how bad it would be to be separated eternally from one's family members, and get an emotional response from a person who "prays the sinner's prayer" so he doesn't have to go to hell. But is that biblical evangelism? Is that the way the early church reached the lost? It is not.

How did they do it? They planted and watered the seed of God's Word, and let God make it grow.

3. *We must pray fervently for God the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the lost.*

According to Jesus' teaching in John 16:8-11, the Holy Spirit is the one who produces *conviction* in the hearts of lost people. Apart from His convicting work no one can respond rightly to the truth concerning Jesus and the gospel.

Implications: What must we do if we are serious about evangelism?

Our goal is to be practical, not merely theoretical. We must *do* something with what we have learned. But what? Let's discuss the implications.

1. *Sowing implies making contact. There is no impact without contact. How can we make contacts with the three unsaved people for whom we're praying?*

Remember, these individuals are not just "projects" but needy people God calls us to love with His love. What are some ways we can do this?

Possibilities:

2. *To do planting, we must share the truth of the gospel. To share the gospel, we must know the gospel. What are six or seven key verses we can use to present the gospel?*

Review key verses (many of these our children learn in Awana):

Romans 3:23 Romans 6:23 Hebrews 9:27 John 14:6 Romans 5:8

John 1:12

To do: Role play sharing the gospel

3. *To do watering, we must learn how to address the objections of non-Christians. What are some of the common questions non-Christians raise?*

--How do you know *your* beliefs are the *right* ones?

--What about other religions?

--Isn't the Bible just a book written by men and therefore full of errors?

Discuss: Other objections?

4. *Once God gives the increase, our task is not over. What can we do to help our newly saved Christian friend to grow?*

They need the Word. Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth teaching them the word of God (Acts 18:11). We

need to get the Word into new believers and get new believers into the Word!

Discuss: What can we do to help new believers grow in Christ?

Next Week: *“Getting Ready for Evangelism: Some Practical Steps”*