

Of course the story is silly. No owner in his right mind would do anything so foolish. To find such ridiculous behaviour in real life you have to visit the church, where you see this principle in operation constantly!

We are all involved in discipling - We are not all evangelists

WHY WE SOMETIMES DON'T SHARE OUR FAITH

For those with a desire to be more effective in sharing their faith, sometimes our concerns are genuine. Sometimes we just need a little bit of help:

I Don't Know How To Begin!

Communication skills are definitely an advantage when it comes to sharing our faith, but not imperative. Many people do very well without any training at all. They are enthusiastic and enjoy sharing their experiences with others. Learning how to ask certain opening questions, and knowing how to answer certain common objections helps, but it is amazing how many opportunities open up to the person looking, praying and believing for them.

I Don't Know What To Say When Challenged!

If we want to become effective in witnessing we have to learn to overcome objections. Experience teaches us that some objections come up repeatedly:

- ◆ How can a God of love allow such suffering in the world?
- ◆ I believe in God - isn't that enough? I live a good life, I don't hurt anyone, why would God condemn me to hell?

The devil may be clever but he's not very original. With a little training and practise we can gain confidence and become very effective at answering all objections. We have the truth of God's Word and the Holy Spirit to guide us.

I Don't Know The Bible Well Enough!

There's an easy cure for this problem. Regular Bible reading and some systematic study will greatly improve Bible knowledge.

However, the fact remains that the most enthusiastic and effective witnesses are new believers who know little or nothing about the Bible, and what they do know they often get wrong! It's not **WHAT** we know but **WHO** we know that makes us **EFFECTIVE** witnesses. Our own testimony is a story worth telling!

New believers are effective in sharing their faith because their love of God is fresh. They are full of the excitement that comes from meeting Jesus for the first time.

I Don't Want To Bring My Friends To Church!

If this is really the case you might need to sort out your relationship to your church and its leadership, or find a new one more to your liking. God wants us to belong to a church family and be committed to its vision and mission.

We will probably never make our church be what we want it to be. It either is or isn't what we are looking for. If it's not, we should go and find one that is.

Few experiences can match the joy and excitement that flows our way when we find ourselves in a position to share our faith and witness for Jesus to an unbeliever or genuine seeker after the truth.

No matter what the results, the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit is often almost tangible. If the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7;10), then we should expect plenty of divine assistance each time we step out in faith, open our mouths and tell people about Jesus!

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FISHERS OF MEN

When Jesus first called His disciples to follow Him, it was with the words:

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19; Mark 1:17)

During His earthly ministry Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God. He also continually encouraged those who received healing or deliverance to return to their homes and testify to the great things God had done for them (Mark 5:1-20).

At the close of His earthly ministry one of the final instructions to be given to his disciples was that they were to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them.

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8)

Another powerful command is found in Matthew's gospel. Today, we call this passage “The Great Commission”:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20)

Jesus' command is to preach the gospel, share our testimony, and make disciples.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

According to the Bible we are to preach the “gospel of the kingdom” to the whole world (Matt 24:14), right up until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' practise was to preach the gospel of the kingdom during His earthly ministry (Matt 4:23), fully expecting this to continue after His ascension, until He returned again for His Bride (Rev 19:7), the Church. Preaching the gospel is a divinely appointed way that people may hear and believe.

“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?

And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom 10:14)

Jesus said that to be saved is to be born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3), thus becoming “new creatures in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17). By grace we are saved, through faith (Eph 2:8), not of ourselves, but as a gift of God.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18)

By this divine process of faith and confession we become partakers of eternal life and heirs of God's promises:

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved” (Rom 10:9)

Dying Without Christ

The Bible clearly states that everyone who has not experienced eternal life through the born again experience is outside of the kingdom and the promises of God, and therefore runs the risk of dying without Christ:

“Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6)

MOBILISING SOULWINNERS

The following extract is from Ken Chant's book, “Building The Church God Wants”, under the heading, ‘Mobilising Soulwinners’.

When the overseers of the church fulfil their duties as I have described, then the congregation will be fitted to fulfil the great task Christ has given to the church as a whole: **EVANGELISM**. But before a local congregation can fully obey that divine commission, it too must do three practical things, based on the principles expressed in Rom 12:3-8 & 1 Cor 12:28-31 and similar passages:

1. Identify those in its number who have been especially gifted by God to win men and women to Christ.
2. Find ways to enable those people to fulfil their role.
3. Mobilise the remainder of the people to serve God in their particular capacity or calling.

Here is an illustration of the principles upon which I have built this premise:

Many years ago I worked as the accountant of a group of furniture stores in the suburbs of Melbourne. The firm had at least a hundred other employees. Some of them worked as shop sales people; others sold on commission from door to door; others drove trucks, packed the goods, repaired damaged items, and so on. Then there were the handful of us who worked in the administration building.

I was employed there for over a year, during which time I never once saw any of the shops, nor a single item they sold, nor even one customer.

How did that happen? Simply because my job was upstairs in the accountant's department, in a separate head office building. The nearest shop was miles away from where I worked. So ledgers, journals, accounts and countless columns of numbers engaged all my attention. Yet no one in the organisation was any more committed than I to the success of its primary business, which was to sell domestic furniture and hardware to the citizens of suburban Melbourne.

Now imagine this scene. Suppose the owner has called all his workers into his office to rebuke them for declining sales. ‘The task of this business’, he roars, ‘is to sell goods. A downturn in our profits cannot be tolerated. I want our sales turnover doubled in the next few weeks. All of you drop whatever you're doing and get out onto those streets and sell! sell! sell!’

So we all down tools - clerks, drivers, packers, mechanics, bookkeepers, typists, shop assistants - and off we go to join the commission sales agents, cold canvassing the streets of Melbourne, trying to persuade reluctant customers to buy our goods!

If such a thing were to be done, what do you suppose would happen to the business? You know the answer: swift chaos and total ruin!

True, the success of the enterprise did depend upon constant growth in its sales. But there was only one way to achieve that goal: each employee had to do well just the job he or she was employed to do.

In my case, that meant balancing the books of account to the last penny each month, which was done. There was no need for me ever to see a customer or sell a chair. Indeed, I would have harmed the corporation, not helped it, if I had abandoned the job in which I was skilled (accounting), and had taken on a job for which I was ill-suited [commission selling].”

POWER FROM ON HIGH

Knowing beforehand that we might view the task of witnessing and sharing our faith with some fear and trepidation, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to watch out for us, and to equip us for service.

"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" (Acts 1:8)

It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to witness effectively.

So now with the **COMMAND** to go and the **POWER** to get the job done, all we need is the **WILL** to obey and the **WAY** will be provided by the Lord.

When we are full of the Holy Spirit we have a desire to see the gospel go forth into the world, and when the Spirit of God moves us there is nothing in this world that can stop us.

With correct **motivation**, and the **authority** to act as His witnesses we have access to the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit of God to **accomplish** the task effectively. When God **anoints** and **appoints** us to do His bidding, He will always ensure we are well **equipped** for the task.

Be Filled With The Spirit

"Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18)

We are told be filled with the Spirit. Actually, the above passage should more accurately read, **"be continually filled with the Spirit"**. It is so much easier to do what we are supposed to do when God's Spirit is filling us with His peace, His presence and His joy. We would worry less about witnessing and sharing our faith if we were to practise being "filled with the Spirit" more often.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal 5:16)

A believer who rarely or never finds time to witness, who does not share his or her faith with others, who neglects to seek out opportunities to preach the gospel of the kingdom to those who are lost and dying in their sin, is walking in the flesh and not fulfilling God's Great Commission for their life.

When someone is filled with the Spirit of God they tend to be excited by their experience. They feel like telling someone about it. Their desire is to share what they have with someone they know or care about. This is as God intended it to be. The problem is, if we are not as filled with the Holy Spirit as we should be, it becomes much harder for us to fulfil the Great Commission calling we all share.

As well as giving us the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus also called Him the comforter or helper, who would lead us into all truth and to testify, through us, about Jesus (John 14:16; 15:26).

Is Everyone An Evangelist?

What if I'm not gifted in speech? What if I'm not good with words? Look at what God told Moses when he made this excuse (Exod 4:10-12).

Clearly some are more gifted than others, and some are especially chosen to be evangelists and preachers. But others are not. We may not all be evangelists, but we are all called to be involved in the process of soulwinning.

Read the very insightful article on the following page to see what I mean.

Without Christ our only expectation is judgment - eternal banishment from the presence of God. The Bible calls the place of banishment "Hell" or "Hades". Rejection of Christ brings judgement, which is an unpopular concept today.

"Inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27)

"This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19)

It is important to understanding the nature of eternal punishment and reward as the Bible teaches it. After all, there really is a heaven to gain, and a hell to shun.

In one passage Jesus speaks strongly about there being more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance (Luke 15:3-11). He then proceeds to tell about the prodigal son to illustrate his point, and emphasise the fact that we should have the same heart and mind towards lost humanity that God has towards us (Luke 15:12-32).

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8)

Seek To Save That Which Was Lost

When we first hear the gospel message, assuming we have not been brought up in a Christian home, we usually take some persuading. As we become more open to the truth of salvation and the need to receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour we ask many questions, and over time make a decision that leads us to becoming born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3).

Being a witness for Christ can cost something. Apart from the effort it takes, and the joy it engenders, we may also experience ridicule, argument, disagreement, insults and persecution from time to time. It goes with the territory (John 15:17-19).

Preaching the gospel of the kingdom, seeking to find and save the lost, even becoming **"all things to all people that by all means you might win some"**, is the responsibility of every believer (1 Cor 9:19-23). God is serious about matters pertaining to populating heaven. We should be too! Ask yourself this question ...

If being a Christian were a crime, punishable by law, would there be enough evidence to convict me?

Does our life show clear proof of our faith walk? How do we treat those around us, our family, those who daily cross our path, strangers, even critics? Does our private behaviour match our public persona? Genuine faith produces visible fruit. (Gal 5:22-23). Does the world see you as a Christian, or as one of their own?

Our mission in Christ is to seek out and save the lost, whatever it costs, whatever it takes. The eternity of so many people depends upon our response to this call.

I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it" (1 Cor 9:22-23)

The very reason Christ came into the world was so that the world, through Him might be saved (John 3:16). It was a sacrifice of love. God so *loved* the world that He gave Himself for the world.

When our lives reflect our faith walk, when the evidence of our faith is known to all without the need to preach it constantly, when we become vessels the Holy Spirit can use anytime, anyplace, sharing our faith becomes a natural outworking of who we are, and what we believe. Our testimony can be our most powerful message.

A HEAVEN TO GAIN . . .

Heaven is a universally accepted concept amongst most religions, not just the Christian faith, and most people will state they believe they will make it to heaven when they die (if only just) for a variety of very creative reasons. “I believe in God” and “I’m basically a good person” are common among many others. But the Bible teaches this is not enough. Even the devil believes in God, and his ultimate destination is certainly not heaven.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

The Reality Of Sin

Accepting the reality of sin in the world, in ourselves, and the existence of a place called Hell requires a giant leap of faith for most people. Acknowledging they have been wrong, must repent and make a major change of direction in life is a tough ask. Many questions come up when these matters are raised, and need answering help them come to terms with the errors in their thinking and mind-set.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23)

Our ‘goodness’ is like filthy rags in the sight of God (Is 64:4; Rom 3:10-12), and nothing we can do in our own strength or by our own hard work and sacrifice will change that. Only through Christ are we able to enter God’s presence and have our sin forgiven and our guilt taken away. As Christians we have already found this to be true. But what about the unbeliever?

Only A Fool Says In His Heart, ‘There Is No God’ (Ps 14:1 & 53:1)

In my experience there are not many who genuinely fall into this category. Most people, when cornered and faced with a desperate or life threatening situation, will turn to God and pray. If God doesn’t answer them, or doesn’t give them what they want, they may even blame the God in whom they do not believe.

In Australia our approach to spiritual things is generally humanistic and secular. This makes us a spiritually shallow and self-seeking people group.

We are rebellious, anti-authority and proud of it! We denigrate our politicians and Christian leaders while hailing our sporting heroes as demi-gods and remembering our outlaws and criminals with fond affection.

We fear no-one and fight fiercely for our right to be independent and answerable to none but ourselves. This stands us in good stead in wartime where these qualities have made Australians respected as warriors as well as anti-authority larrikins, or as peacekeepers, but does not make for easy conversion to faith in Jesus Christ.

There is a God in heaven, and there is a place for those who say “Yes!” to Jesus. There is also an evil personality called the devil and Satan, and together with his hordes of fallen angels and demons he wants to populate hell with the rebellious sons of Adam who choose to reject the gospel and live without Christ.

“Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28)

THE GREAT COMMISSION

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20)

The above passage is commonly referred to as **The Great Commission** and its content covers a number of points worth considering as a Christian:

1. All authority now rests with the Son

This statement can also be found in Col 1:13-18 & Phil 2:9-11, and many other similar passages. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and as believers our task is to continue this mission until He returns. Satan is strongly motivated to keep the world in bondage and unbelief. Ours must therefore be to see captives released and oppressed go free (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus has given us authority to carry out this work. All we need is the will and the passion to do it.

2. We are to “Go and Make Disciples”

This statement is structured as a command, not a ministry option for those who feel inclined or gifted to do it. We are all called to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8), to share our faith (1 Thes 1:6-8), prepared to preach the gospel “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2).

The word “Go” is more aggressive than the way we interpret it. We are not called to passively share our faith. Waiting for the Lord to open a door is one thing, but some doors need much encouragement before opening (Rev 3:20; Matt 7:7,8).

Do not make the mistake of waiting for “the right time”. Just as God’s promises are all “yes” and “amen” (2 Cor 1:20) so **now** is the day of salvation, and **now** is the acceptable time to share our faith (2 Cor 6:2).

3. We Must Teach Obedience

In an age where individual freedom is often considered above what is good for society and the community, and where obedience to any form of authority is treated as suspect, we must teach a generation of new and not-so-new believers what it means to be obedient. If we had always been obedient to the Great Commission we would not have so many struggling churches all over Australia, and millions of people going to hell. If we had been obedient, the people of God would be the head wagging the tail (the world), not the other way round (Deut 28:13). Many believers do not know how to possess the many promises of God to His children. Obedience to the Great Commission is one significant key, and our message must be biblically based and relevant to our culture and society.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

New Testament believers had no problems sharing their faith with their families, neighbours and friends (Acts 2:43-45). The gospel message took off like a bush-fire in a mid-summer drought and the church grew and prospered. Within a few short years the church was established and had spread to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire, and continued to grow.

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily” (Acts 16:5)

“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also” (Acts 17:6)