

Course DC217 Personal Evangelism

. . . that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. Philemon 1:6

Intro: Evangelism is a subject which must be rescued from several misconceptions—perhaps none more popular than that of wrongly equating “evangelism” and “being a good witness” as if they were identical expressions. Truly the expressions are related to one another, but they are not absolutely one and the same thing—at least not after the manner in which most define what it means to be a “good witness.” Being a “good witness” encompasses the whole of our Christian life. It includes (but is not limited to) how we work, how we recreate, how we spend our money, how we treat our family members, and even how we treat our household pets. However, “evangelism” concerns the express declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These more precise definitions reveal a distinction, although not a total separation from one another. For “evangelism” apart from a “good witness” would only hurt *the Name of the LORD* before men. Likewise, as one’s understanding increases, evangelism should become inseparable from one’s Christian witness. Paul’s prayerful desire expressed in Philemon 1:6 testifies to more than just living out your Christian faith, it includes the *effective “sharing of your faith.”*

⁴ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, ⁵ hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, ⁶ that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. ⁷ For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. Philemon 1:4-7¹

*“Our first responsibility is not the evangelization of the world, but to be spiritually worthy to proclaim. It would be a tragedy to propagate a defective form of Christianity.”
—A.W. Tozer*

Proceeding the Effective Sharing of our Faith must be a Love for Christ and a Love toward Christians:

- **⁴ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, ⁵ hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints . . .**

Effective Sharing of One’s Faith is provided in Christ:

- **⁶ that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. Philemon 1:5-7**

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³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this ALL WILL KNOW that you are My disciples, if you have LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. John 13:34-35

¹ The word rendered “sharing” is the Greek word κοινωνία (Phon., *coy-know-knee-ah*), a word used in Scripture to express “liberal sharing” (e.g. 2 Cor. 9:13). However it is also a word used for “fellowship” in the Bible. Translations vary here at Philemon 1:6, some translating it as communication/sharing and others as fellowship. Whereas both English words make sense in the sentence (as well as the fact that the Holy Spirit can certainly communicate both thoughts by the use of the one word κοινωνία), the thought of *sharing the faith* certainly fits in well with what follows, that it “**may become effective.**” And certainly, the idea of *the effective communication of the faith* is set forth elsewhere in Scripture—Paul himself asking for prayer *that he would boldly share the faith as he ought* (cf. Eph. 6:19), and in Iconium we read that “**they so spoke** [spoke so effectively NIV]” that many believed. May we see our place in the Great Commission to *take the Gospel to every creature*, praying for the effectual sharing of the faith through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are Under the Great Commission — We Have the Gospel which the World Needs:

“This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on earth.” —Keith Green—

- Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.
- Luke 14:22-23 ²² And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' ²³ Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.
- Luke 10:2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.
- John 4:35 Do you not say, "There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!
- 2 Corinthians 5:19 . . . and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

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Our Witness before the World—It Matters How we Live:

- Matt. 5:13-16 ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- Col. 4:5-6 ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

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- Matt 10:16 ¹⁶ "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
- 2 Cor. 2:14-17 ¹⁴ Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading to* death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading to* life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

- Titus 2:1-10 ¹ But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ² that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³ the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴ that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. ⁶ Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. ⁹ Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Living so that the World Recognizes Us as Christians Grants (and can even Earn) Opportunities to Speak:

- 1 Peter 3:13-17 ¹³ And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."* ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For *it is better*, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.
- 1 Peter 3:1 ¹ Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives
- John 13:34-35 ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- Gal. 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- James 2:14-17 ¹⁴ What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
- Matt. 25:37-40 ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

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**Evangelizing Requires the Presence and Power of God
(Becoming in League with God in His Pursuit of Souls):**

- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
- John 15:26-27 ²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.
- Rev. 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.
- 2 Cor. 6:1-3 ¹ We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: "*In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.*" Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ³ We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
- Rom. 10:13-15 ¹³ For "*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" ¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*"
- 2 Cor. 5:20 ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.
- Matt. 4:19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

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The Gospel and Evangelizing

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. ¹¹ Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.1
Corinthians 15:1-11

At the start of this lesson it was pointed out that there is a distinction between *evangelism* and one's *witness*—showing that, although they are not absolutely identical terms, they are certainly related to one another. In fact, they are so closely related that we may harmlessly enough interchange the terms—so long as we understand that there is an actual and an expressible difference between them. Again, our witness touches all of our Christian lives—i.e., who we are and what we do because we are Christians. But evangelism speaks of expressly giving forth the Gospel message, the good news, of what God has accomplished for us through Christ in order that we might be saved. Evangelism, in a more precise sense, speaks of communicating the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, proclaiming how His death, burial and resurrection opened the way for all who believe in Him to be saved. The goal of evangelizing is that men should believe in Jesus, as Paul and Silas said to the Philippian jailer who asked them, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”** (Acts 16:29-31).

However, before one can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, *one must sense his need for salvation*. For one may hear a very sound Gospel presentation which sets forth the truths contained in the above passage from 1 Corinthians 15, and yet still not sense his true need for salvation. In contrast, the Philippian jailer truly sensed his desperate spiritual need, and thus the cure (**“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”**) became wonderful news to him as **“they spoke the word of the Lord to**

him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:32). But two-minute Gospel presentations have often been employed in an attempt which seeks to get people quickly over the goal line through saying a prayer *before they really understand what hit them*. However, Jesus did not give the **“living water”** from the well of salvation of which He spoke when the woman at the well asked for it, saying **“Sir, give me this water. . .”** (John 4:15), for she did not yet understand either the salvation of which He spoke nor who He is who offers this salvation—as well as not yet sensing her own desperate need for salvation (*things that became clear to her in time as He spoke with her*).

To this woman Jesus said, **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water”** (John 4:10). In like manner, to evangelize we must set forth the gift of God (salvation) and the giver of the gift (Jesus Christ). Her encounter that day with the Master revealed both the *Gift* and the *Giver of the Gift*. There could be no rushing her over the goal line, she needed to understand these truths, as well as sensing her great spiritual need to receive salvation from Him. Let our efforts in evangelism strive to set forth both the *Gift* and the *Giver of the Gift*, rather than rushing to push one over the goal line before they understand and sense their spiritual need.

The following sections set forth truths which assist people in understanding why, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”** is such good news—truths which reveal the greatness of the gift and the Giver of the gift, He who is able to meet our desperate need for salvation. *Consider:*

1.) **The Character and Nature of God (He is Absolutely Holy) :**

- Revelation 4:8 And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”
- 1 Timothy 6:15-16 . . . the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.
- 1 John 1:5-6 ⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
- Psalms 5:4 For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You.
- 1 Samuel 2:2 No one is holy like the Lord, for *there is* none besides You, nor *is there* any rock like our God.

God, being absolutely holy and righteous, can have no fellowship with sin and unrighteousness (2 Cor. 6:15). This truth is inseparably related to the need of the plan of salvation—i.e., the Gospel.

- 1 Corinthians 6:8-10 ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.
- Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?
- Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
- Psalm 50:21-22 ²¹ These *things* you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; *But* I will rebuke you, And set *them* in order before your eyes. ²² "Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear *you* in pieces, And *there be* none to deliver:
- Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

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4.) The Solution to Mankind's Sin (the Plan of Salvation):

- Romans 8:1-4 ¹ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
- Isaiah 53:5-6, 10-11 ⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

The wonderful plan of salvation—God has made a way for sinners to be reconciled to Himself through the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ! Being fully God He is Infinite, and being truly Man He is able to be our true Substitutionary Sacrifice at the cross to put away sin—removing all that separates mankind from God. Fully God and Fully Man in One Person, only our Lord Jesus Christ could and has provided salvation—worship Him!

Notes: _____

Hebrews 2:14-15 ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

- Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
- 1 Timothy 2:3-6 ³ . . . God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man* Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time
- Isaiah 53:6 & 10-11 ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Romans 8:31-34 ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴ Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

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. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17

5.)

**How We Partake of Salvation
(What Must We Do to be Saved?):**

**Faith Manifested in: Repentance,
Confession, Forsaking Sin**

- Acts 20:21 ²¹ testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, **repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- Luke 13:3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.
- Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.
- Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.
- 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Gospel calls people to believe in Jesus—indeed, he who believes in Jesus is saved! But, what does it mean to believe in Him? It is certainly more than just believing that the Gospel is factually true—even demons believe that (James 2:19). Consider what the following Scriptures reveal concerning salvation and one genuinely believing in Jesus:

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- Acts 3:19-21 ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Repentance speaks not only of sorrow over past sins but it is a pledge concerning future conduct. Likewise, to confess sin is to agree with how God views it, and to therefore to forsake it.

Faith Manifested in: Humble Receiving

- James 1:21-22²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- John 1:12-13 ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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- 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 ¹ We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: "*In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.*" Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.
- John 3:33 He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.

Faith Manifested in: Genuinely Trusting Him and an Unashamed Confession of Him

- Romans 10:9-13 ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*" ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"
- Matthew 10:32 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- John 6:37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.
- Acts 10:43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.
- Acts 2:21 *And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved (and)* Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

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Overcoming the Fear of Objections Raised:

Paralyzing many is the fear that they shall be asked a question from an unbeliever which they cannot answer. Thoughts of, *“What if I cannot answer their questions? Perhaps I shall cause them to forever reject the faith and they shall end up in hell—and all from my poor lack of knowledge!”* But brothers and sisters, can you not hear the hiss of the serpent behind such a thought? More than this, *can you not hear the fear in your enemy* in his whispering this thought to your heart? For Satan has reason to fear that you shall step out in obedience to the Great Commission—fearing that you shall discover the truth that (in spite of your limitations and weaknesses) Jesus shall be with you, even to the end of the age.

Concerning difficult questions, the believer should understand that the fear they may create in one doesn't square with reality. First, multiple Christians have testified (and to this I add my own testimony) that they could hardly believe the things that came out of their mouth at such times! Like the loaves and fishes blessed by Jesus, the Lord often multiplies through the believer the bread of life which they have to share when they step out in faith.

Yet, beyond this, even if it should happen that there should be a question or arguments which you cannot answer, *such will not negate the effectiveness of what you have shared with them.* Recall the man who had received his sight after being born blind. He could not answer the objections from the educated religious leaders who sought to prove that it was a mistake to become a follower of Christ. Consider that this man's answer reveals that he was more ignorant about Christ *than you are right now*, and yet how effectively he testified for Jesus through simply sticking to what he did know and understand, saying: **“Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that**

though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). Furthermore, as ignorant as he was, he sensed the weakness of these highly educated objectors, even that they were internally wrestling with who Jesus was—and he confounded them with simple logic, saying: **“Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing”** (John 9:30-33).

There is not adequate space nor is there any necessity in a lesson like this to try and address all the possible objections which someone may raise. However, regardless of what may be raised, when dealing with objectors I would encourage the believer to keep these three things in mind:

- **Don't throw pearls to swine** (Matt. 7:6, Acts 13:46).
- **Be not quarrelsome but gentle, correcting in humility those in opposition** (2 Tim. 2:23-26).
- **3.) Plainly and unashamedly, set forth that Jesus is the only way to God** (John 14:6, Gal. 2:21; 3:21). If He were not the only way (*if there were any other way for people to be saved*) then God let Jesus die in vain—a thought that most will realize is a horrible thing to charge God with. Yet, if one insists that they are good enough as they are, gently let them know they are calling God a liar, charging Him with needlessly letting Jesus die on the cross.

People are neither won nor lost to Christ on the basis of how well some difficult question or argument was answered by us — people are won to Christ by a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Notes: _____ *Believe that God delights to use you, and that His grace is sufficient for you, His strength made perfect in weakness.*

¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Redeeming the Time/Making the Most of Every Opportunity in Evangelism

. . . that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. Philemon 1:6

The original design of course DC217 was that this article be read before the lecture for the course is heard.

After many years of being a Christian who has been exposed to various methods of “*How to do evangelism*” ministries, I am convinced that there are no short cuts to Paul’s prayerful desire **“. . . that the sharing of your faith may become effective”** (Philem. 1:6). This, however, has not stopped many well-meaning Christians from rushing to the latest “foolproof method” of sharing the faith—and disappointing results have followed after the initial novelty of the approach has faded. However, I am also convinced that ***there is nothing involved in the effective sharing of our faith that cannot be experienced by every believer.*** Effective evangelism begins with *love for Jesus* and love for others (the first and second greatest commandments), rather than a foolproof method of sharing the Gospel. There are simply no shortcuts to effective evangelism.

Dismal is the trail of evangelism-gimmicks which have been proposed by well-meaning Christians—i.e., poll taking, questionnaires and so forth. For all the initial excitement these may generate, such attempts only bring discouragement to those believers who try them, as well as providing a distasteful reputation for evangelism with the outside world. Sadly, some proposed methods even border on being dishonest.

This is true even concerning some less questionable methods which have been promoted by truly well-meaning believers—yet, which likewise have brought both discouragement to the

saved, and needless annoyance to unbelievers. I’m including methods of sharing the faith *which have much to commend them* concerning the presentation of Gospel Truth which they contain. However, they ultimately become ineffective because they largely amount to a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Such methods basically give a blitz presentation of the Gospel which resembles the two-minute offense of a football team—i.e., designed to get the unbeliever over the goal line in two minutes or less. Again, it is not that they do not contain a well thought out presentation of the Gospel, but rather that such preprogrammed scripts cannot be equated with the effective sharing of the faith.

For example (*and I share this as kindly as I can*), one method is entitled “The Way of the Master.” It is not that the method is void of Gospel truth, there even being much to commend in it, but *that its presentation is unworthy of the title*—a title which promotes a false understanding about what constitutes the effective sharing of the faith. For the Master dealt with people where they were. He indeed used the law with the rich young ruler (*the approach of the “Way of the Master” program greatly reflected in that encounter*). However, the Master dealt very differently with the woman at the well, and with Nicodemus, and with the woman caught in adultery—for they were at a very different place when they encountered Jesus. The

true *Way of the Master* was to minister by the Holy Spirit to people where they were at in order that they might become partakers of the Gospel of salvation. The Holy Spirit moved Jude to write, ²² **And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh”** (Jude 1:21-23). One simply

cannot expect to truly imitate the Master’s way unless he/she ministers with a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

Sadly (*I have witnessed this*), a problem with any predeveloped method of evangelism is that they may serve to puff up those who trust in them. Some, resting in the method, become nearly oblivious (*if not callous*) to those with whom they share, being more concerned with the execution of

And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.
Jude 1:21-23

their two-minute offense rather than with the soul whose eternal welfare is dreadfully unsettled. Likewise, such methods are designed to primarily work on “cold sales”—that is, people whom they do not know and who they quite likely will never meet again. How can this be the effective sharing of one’s faith? The ground of evangelism is to be related to the genuine presence of Christ in our life, not by the fact that the person we speak to knows nothing about us.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year
of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19*

Please do not misunderstand me when I say that gimmicks and methods are not the effective sharing of the faith of which Paul spoke. For I am not saying that such presentations serve no usefulness in helping one to become familiar with how to begin to share the Gospel. However, a dependence upon them will never lead to effective evangelism. This is true even when the salvation of a soul may have resulted after one has given such a method of Gospel presentation. But rather than giving undue credit to the methodology used, understand that the effective sharing of the faith was the result of other contributing factors—factors such as the fact that the person sharing the Gospel (*whether through fear or even panic*) cast themselves upon the Holy Spirit; had a heart of genuine love and concern for the individual’s soul with whom they spoke; as well as including the ripeness of the soul to whom the Holy Spirit brought them. Yet (if one fresh from such success seeks to duplicate the results *through trusting in the method of Gospel presentation they used rather than on the Spirit of God using and leading them*), it becomes a sure way to discover that *the effective sharing of your faith cannot be reduced down to any formula of Gospel presentation.*

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
Acts 1:8*

Real evangelism is sharing the Gospel (the good news—yes, communicating the elements of

the Gospel) in league with the Holy Spirit—being sensitive to His leading, including who to speak with, what to say, and when to either stop for a time or to press on to the invitation to come to Christ. There is simply no shortcut (*no gimmick, no method, no memorized presentation*) which can manufacture the effective sharing of the faith. Evangelism cannot be reduced down to a formula or an argument-proof approach that works on one and all. This is the hidden problem with all such methods of Gospel presentation, as useful as they may truly be in helping to equip and embolden one for the true effective sharing of their faith.

However, there is an opposite danger in pointing out the problems associated with those who would reduce the effective sharing of the faith down to a methodology. Namely, that it encourages those who do nothing at all to wrongly congratulate themselves that they never use such gimmicks! I would never wish to be quoted as if I were in support for those who do nothing at all in the realm of evangelism *except to brag that they never use gimmicks!* For how is the effective sharing of one’s faith accomplished in doing nothing at all?

Christian, ***you must be convinced*** that the Spirit of God is able to lead you to the effective sharing of your faith. Do not hide behind the truth that some are especially gifted in sharing the faith as a reason by which you excuse yourself. The line from the children’s song, “*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine*” has much to teach us. To be in Christ’s Body (the Church) is to have light; indeed, Christ in us makes us the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16). Taking the illustration of light, consider that all lights have been designed with a purpose, whether we speak of a lighthouse’s lamp or that of a small bedroom nightlight, and all the various lights in-between these. The million candle power of a lighthouse lamp is able to safely guide to port great ocean liners filled with thousands of people. And a nightlight’s lamp



... that the sharing of your faith may become effective... Philm. 1:6

is designed to allow one awakening from pitch blackness to safely navigate around the room while his eyes warm up enough to benefit from the bathroom's still brighter light—and ultimately the eyes are warmed up to the point where one is even ready to walk in the light of the sun at full noon. However, consider how awful it would be for one to be awakened from sleep to the candle power of a lighthouse. One being awakened by such would only hate and curse the light, closing their eyes to it all the tighter! In a like manner Christian, if you are indeed a Christian, you have light—and every light has its purpose. You have been gifted and designed for a purpose—do not deny it. Pray to be lead to *the effective sharing of your faith*—neither hiding the light He has given you under a bushel, nor thinking more highly of yourself than you ought, but rather with sober judgment (Matt. 5:15-16 & Rom. 12:3).

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1:7

Evangelism, sharing the Gospel, the effective sharing of our faith, does not go against our enlightened commonsense. We are not called to uncomfortably (i.e., annoyingly) trap someone and then let loose on them our two-minute preprogrammed Gospel presentation irrespective of the person's genuine willingness to hear it through. We would not appreciate such behavior towards ourselves. Such an action cannot be walking **"in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time"** (Col. 4:5). Let us then focus for a moment on what it means to wisely **redeem the time**.

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ **redeeming the time** [making the most out of every opportunity (NIV)], because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:15-17

To redeem the time is to use the time (the occasions/the encounters we have) wisely—or as the NIV renders it, to make **"the most out of every opportunity."** Dwell upon this simple truth—to make the most out of every opportunity. For clearly, **opportunity** speaks of limits. An opportunity by definition means an occasion which

allows for *something* to be accomplished or take place. If we as believers come to grasp this simple truth as it relates to evangelism, it will not only be encouraging and liberating to us, it will result in unbelievers becoming comfortable around us (willing to listen to us) and open to what we share **in an opportunity**. Thus, consider three easy to understand and implement points concerning effectively sharing the faith:

1.) In short, when sharing the faith, use only opportunities. This is the starting principle. Or we may state this first point this way: Never try to make (force) more out of an opportunity than an opportunity allows.

Most evangelism techniques fail (i.e., *becoming a discouragement to believers and a needless annoyance to unbelievers*) on this very ground: **they try to make more out of the opportunity than what is there – or – they seek to force their presentation where no opportunity presents itself at all.** Again, by definition, an opportunity implies a time frame which allows for something. Yet, just as trying to put too much air in a balloon ruins the balloon, so trying to force more in an opportunity ruins the opportunity. In truth, we simply cannot do better in an opportunity than to make the most out of what it allows. As someone has graphically pointed out, "People do not drink living water from a fire hydrant!" The water in the fire hydrant contains that which all life needs, but coming out with such force makes ingesting it extremely problematic. So it often is with a gospel presentation which goes from beginning to end in two-minutes. More information may be set forth than an opportunity truly allows to be received.

One of the elements of effectively sharing our faith is *revealing that God is near them* though they may not perceive Him, and that He truly loves them. *This will be communicated to them in part by the presence of God being in us—which results in a demonstration of love for them.* Thus, consider both a ridiculous example and a sound example in regards to using what an

...so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...
Acts 17:28

opportunity allows, starting with the ridiculous. Imagine the foolishness of someone starting to “evangelize” a bride two minutes before she’s about to walk down the aisle, beginning their two minute presentation by asking her, “Are you ready to die?”. Clearly this would be no opportunity for such. And, if one were to try to do so (force it) regardless, then it would not only make that Christian look bad, but it would make neither the Gospel nor the God of the Gospel attractive to them—seeing what manner of uncaring people it apparently produces.

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
Matthew 10:16

However, changing the scene, understand that it may be a very appropriate time (opportunity) for a true Christian friend to say with a kind smile, “Hey Mary, would you mind if I said a very short prayer right now?”—and upon receiving permission pray: “O Lord God, thank You for designing marriage. This is such a beautiful occasion for Mary and John. Please help her and John to be able to be calm enough in the midst of all the excitement to truly enjoy and remember this special moment in their life. In Jesus name, Amen.” Now that would be seizing an opportunity to reveal the truth that God is near, that He is concerned about her life—a truth backed up by *a demonstration of love and care from Christ being in the Christian’s life.*

Yet, someone will protest, “That is not evangelizing!” However, although nothing was shared about Jesus dying for our sins and raising up from the dead as the victor over everything that separates one from God if they will believe in Him, *it did reveal that God cares about her, a fact evident in this Christian friend who brought to light a bit more the reality of God being in the life of the believer.* Furthermore, that and that alone is all that particular opportunity allowed to be communicated—which is still a valid element necessary to true evangelism. Furthermore, such a proper use of the opportunity should naturally lead to still another opportunity—one where much more can and should be shared. Perhaps Mary will have a crisis in her life which causes her to think about God.

**⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.
⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**
Colossians 4:5-6

Mary will certainly know to whom she can safely approach—having a friend who is different than all her other friends, one who loves her and cares about her ***and unashamedly brings God near in every situation.*** No one can be expected to care what we know until they know that we care—and care in a manner that no one else can duplicate, ***the very presence of God being brought near, Christ being in us.***

Someone may be thinking, “That may work well concerning someone who knows you real well, but what about reaching a ‘cold-sale?’” First I would remind people that the Gospel is not confined to “cold-sales.” It is true that you may be in an encounter with a person you have never met. The occasion may allow you to share much—even going the distance, so to speak. But still, one must not do more than the opportunity allows. Let the believer seek to become sensitive to the Holy Spirit revealing what an opportunity allows for—and make the most of it.

Perhaps we may be used to truly preparing the ground for another encounter—setting clearly before them only one element necessary to the reception of the Gospel, *such as proving that they are lost and need a Savior.* Once I was sharing on the holiness of God with someone I worked with when he stated in somewhat of a mocking and humorous manner, that if what I said was true, then no one could ever be saved. I felt impressed from the tone he used to let him stew in that for a time and said something to the affect that, “Yep, the Bible says none is righteous, not one. Absolutely no one is able to save himself.” And then I went about my way until a little later that same day when I believed a better opportunity was afforded to me to pick up where I had left off, and shared with him what the Holy Lord God had done in sending Jesus because of the problem of sin—something his manner of speech testified to me earlier that he was not ready to hear, for we are not to throw pearls to swine. The point is, we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit to reveal to us just what an opportunity does allow for, rather than

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.
Matthew 7:6

have a polished evangelism formula/presentation which we must run through as if it will fit one and all encounters. Let us instead trust the Holy Spirit to lead someone else (if not ourselves later) to build upon what was faithfully shared through us in accordance with what the opportunity allowed. Be not persuaded by the lie that their salvation or damnation depends upon our preprogrammed manner of Gospel presentation running its full course. We need sensitivity to the Spirit's leading concerning just what an opportunity truly allows for, and then to faithfully seek to make the most of it.

²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:24-26

This requires a firm belief that the Father is drawing people to Jesus, that the Holy Spirit is bringing the needed conviction, and that God is warming their hearts before we ever get there. You have light, shine it. Worry not that you cannot bring in an oceanliner full of people, you lead one safely to the light of the Son through your lit life. You do not have to be able to answer all their questions, but you do need to be one who studies to show himself *approved unto God*. There may be a brighter light ahead for them to whom the Holy Spirit will lead them, someone who can answer the questions they raised that you could not answer. But the light you shined will have warmed them up to desire more light—you reveal that even if you don't know just how to answer them, yet you know that Christ is true. We need no slick presentation, nor do we need to know how to answer all their questions. Go shine Christian.

It is a great misconception that we need to give someone the whole ball of wax, calling them to a decision, otherwise we have no part in evangelizing. For we may be lead to communicate only one aspect relevant to the reception of the Gospel—and the Holy Spirit may use another to reveal the next. Listen not to the lie that, *"This is their only chance! Unless I do it perfectly they will be damned!"* You can neither save nor damn anyone. Seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. You

People are neither won nor lost to Christ on the basis of how well some difficult question or argument was answered by us — people are won to Christ by a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

may be the sower, you may be the waterer, or you may be the harvester of the one the Spirit leads to you. Yes, sometimes you may be all three—but again, ask what the opportunity is. Do your part in the harvest and pray for laborers to do what is not your opportunity—trusting the Holy Spirit, the Lord of the Harvest. Not everyone we meet is ready to repent and receive Christ, but everyone is on a journey through life. When fishing, every fisherman knows he doesn't have to reel the fish in immediately. The experienced fisherman knows to let the fish be intrigued with the bait. To jerk the hook too soon

may miss snagging the fish. He knows as well when the opportunity comes, he is to set the hook in deep. He knows how to reel in a bit, and then let the fish at times run out the line—until it tires out. To reel the fish in too quickly before the fish is ready to surrender is to risk the line breaking and the fish getting away. Sometimes he waits the fish out, for he is confident that the hook is deeply set within. May we become wise fishers of men.

The heart of all evangelism is prayer *at every stage*—before we encounter souls, after the encounter with souls, and even *DURING THE ENCOUNTER WITH SOULS*. A complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit is the need. For God alone is able to bless the little which we have to give, add it to what others have given, and multiply it to meet any need associated with evangelizing the lost. Let us refuse then to be paralyzed by fears that we are not able to give them everything they need, for such fears will keep us *from giving them what we can and must give them*. Recall the account of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men. The need of the crowd was truly greater than the disciples' abilities to meet. Yet Jesus said to them, **"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat"** (Matt. 14:16). Jesus asked His disciples what it was that they had, *not what they didn't have*, saying, **"How many loaves do you have? Go and see"** (Mark 6:38), telling them to **"Bring them**

They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.
Matt. 14:16

here to Me” (Matt. 14:17). The hopeless question arose, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” (John 6:5). However, Jesus “knew what He would do” (John 6:6), and always does. Concerning the littleness of the loaves and fishes which they brought to Him, “He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude” (Luke 9:16). The result was not only that all received enough through the hands of His disciples, but that there was more than enough.

This becomes a fitting example for us concerning evangelism. We may fear that since we cannot give someone all that they may need (*i.e., answer every possible question which they may raise*) then we are unable to do anything. But just

*Therefore
whoever confesses
Me before men, him
I will also confess
before My Father
who is in heaven.
Matthew 10:32*

as the disciples were told to give them “something to eat” rather than give them all that they needed, so we are to give from what we understand, bringing that to Jesus without worrying about

what we cannot give them—for our Lord alone can bless and multiply it for the need. Furthermore, the miracle of God blessing through what the disciples distributed continues to occur today—Praise the Lord! Multitudes of Christians testify that when they began to share with someone they could hardly believe how God multiplied what they had to share—declaring with joy, “I could hardly believe the wonderful things that were coming out of my own mouth!” Fear of objections and questions being raised which we cannot answer need not hinder evangelism. Recall that the man who received his sight heard that which he could not satisfactorily answer, but he amazed all who heard him *with the certainty of what he did know*: “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).

Likewise, the woman at the well knew but very little, but by her word many came to believe (*cf.* John 4:39-42). There can be no acceptable excuse for a Christian to not seek to have the sharing of their faith become effective. Christian, it is time to shine your light in faith that the Holy Spirit will use you.

Consider then another element associated with the effective sharing of one’s faith, that of:

2.) Being the same person everywhere—*i.e., living among the world as one who is truly unashamed of Christ.* Such living will bring Christ near to people.

Ponder the following two Scriptures anew:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Romans 1:16

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.
.. 1 Peter 3:15

Certainly the Christian agrees on the surface with the thought that we are to be the same person everywhere, it being a repulsive idea that we should live with a secular and sacred separation (e.g., one manner of person at church and another manner of person at work or school). However, being the same person everywhere is a deeper issue than most realize. Consider how many opportunities are lost or ignored through one failing to be the same person outside of church that they are before their Christian friends and family at church.

To illustrate this, consider that if someone were to say to you at church, “Wow, I was in a near accident on my way to church just now, I came really close to dying!” At such a time, wouldn’t it be easy for you to say, “Praise the Lord that you’re alright! I’m thankful God was watching over your life.” Now in the same way, be unashamed to praise and bring up God at the work place. That is, if someone at work should tell you that they almost died in a car wreck today, speak the way you would at church and tell them, “Praise the Lord that

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Romans 1:16**

you are okay! I’m glad the Lord kept you safe.” For in doing so, you have just brought God up before them unashamedly, expressing not only genuine care for them but revealing your unashamed commitment to God. Again, if

someone at church came up to you and poured out some heavy problem that they are having in their family, would you not at the very least tell them that you'll be praying for them—as well as checking back with them later to see how things are going? Furthermore, if time and circumstances allowed, would you not ask them if you could pray with them right then, and placing a hand upon a shoulder say a short prayer for them? Now I realize that this might sound crazy to one who has never done this, but I have often done so with non-Christians (people who I have worked with at secular jobs and wherever I am), even with total strangers, praying for them. I have often asked one privately at such times, "Would you mind if I said a prayer for you right now?" I have found that nearly 100% of people not only say yes (*I've never had anyone show offense at my asking*), but that after I have prayed a short prayer for them, *they are deeply appreciative*.

Consider how truly living the same way we are everywhere would provide multiple opportunities to speak to others about Christ. Living in such a manner before them (i.e., truly being the same person you are everywhere) will let them know who they can go to when life throws them a curve. They will know who they can approach when they have a troubling or spiritual question—including their own need for salvation. In short, *opportunities will not just be seized by being the same person everywhere, they will actually increase!* And when such an encounter comes, be one who has already sanctified the Lord God in your heart that you may be able to share with gentleness and respect the reason for your own hope in Christ—a hope that you want them to also experience.

In a like manner, I have brought up things that Scripture says at work that fit in well with the conversation, a Proverb here, an example there, even as I would around my Christian friends. It is not beyond you Christian to be the same person everywhere, and in doing so you will bring an awareness of God to others, as well as revealing the relevance of the Word of God to everyday life—and beyond.

³¹ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

³² Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

³³ just as I also please all *men* in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

I know that there are some jobs, like a school teacher, where it may be forbidden to pray out loud with a student—but even then, in order to be the same person everywhere, can you not let them know that you'll be praying for them? Can you not check back with them and ask them how things are going? And do you not think that such living will open up still more opportunities to share with them? Yes! AMEN! To be the same person everywhere is not only profitable for making the most of every opportunity, *but it lends itself to creating even new opportunities*—besides being

liberating and truly joyous for one to be the same person everywhere (i.e., a sold out believer who is unashamed of Christ in any and all situations and encounters).

It is true that some countries make it illegal to be a Christian, not giving them the freedom I'm speaking of to be the same person everywhere. However, even in those countries Christians are under the great commission. Shall we not then seize the opportunity of our religious freedom which our country still affords?

[Note: *While I was at a restaurant and in the very act of finishing up editing this section, I asked a worker how things were going. She said "Peachy" and then after a moment told me that actually her father had died last night. I expressed my sadness at hearing this, and seeing that she had a moment, asked her if I could pray with her. She said yes, and I prayed for God to comfort her. Tears flowed from her and she expressed her gratitude—God was brought nearer to her. May the Lord complete what was started.*]

Christian, the real presence of Christ is in your life. Being the same person everywhere gives opportunity for people to become aware of Jesus' real presence in your life. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in order that you might make the most of every opportunity. Let us bring Jesus near to people through our actual living. For living as

**"Follow Me,
and I will make
you become
fishers of men."**
Mark 1:17

one truly unashamed of Christ brings Him near to their awareness. This is truly a liberating and exciting truth for the Christian to discover. And such living brings us to consider yet another liberating element to the effective sharing of our faith, consider:

3.) Believing (truly believing) that God is warming and preparing people's hearts before we ever have an encounter with them—and from that truth, seek to be a part of what He is doing in their lives, boldly stepping out as He leads in the encounter.

This again speaks of recognizing that we are to make the most out of an opportunity, rather than trying to force our own ideas of evangelism. For we do not want to either miss or interfere with what the Spirit is doing through forcing our well-rehearsed “two minute Gospel presentation.” We simply must be in tune with the Holy Spirit's leading, being bold and unashamed to step out and do whatever the occasion demands (cf. 1 Sam. 10:7).

I share an unusual and wonderful experience (such an encounter has not been my typical experience when I have shared the faith with people—but it illustrates that we must be bold to be a part of what God is doing in their lives). I was at a bus stop at around midnight with a small group of ministers from all over the United States after a Christian conference had let out—being some 2,000 miles away from my hometown. There was a young black girl there who was curious about where we all had just come from (we were carrying materials from the conference). Outside of her, I believe everyone else there was a minister. She kept asking questions of the group, and I began to wonder if she were hungering for salvation. However, the lighthearted talk and joking within the group of ministers did not seem to provide a good opportunity to share the faith, especially with the bus coming at any minute to pick us all up—but I could not totally shake that the Holy Spirit might be creating an opportunity for me or someone else to share with her. In an honest desire to be sensitive to the Spirit and not force my own way, I

“This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”
Zechariah 4:6

prayed, “O Lord, if this woman sits next to me on the bus, then I will know that you want me to share with her.” When the bus came it was empty, every one of us could have claimed 5 or more seats for himself, so it was truly unlikely that this woman would choose to sit next to me. I was the first one on and set in a seat near the driver. When this woman got on, although the bus was quite empty, she sat down right next to me. At that moment I was seized with boldness and confidence that this was from God and turned to her and said (my opening words): “You want to get saved, don't you.” She instantly said yes, and the rest of the trip

I shared the faith with her and prayed with her. Several pastors rejoiced on the bus with us. It turned out she worked near my hotel at an all-night restaurant. I had a little more time to share with her as well as to find out a

pastor in the area who could continue to follow up with her when I flew back home. By the grace of God I have had many opportunities to share the faith with people, but that is the only time I opened with “You want to get saved, don't you.” However, I had become in tune with what the Spirit was doing in this young girl's life at that moment.

I would not be mistaken here on this point. Let us study to show ourselves approved unto God. Let us seek to study in order to effectively communicate the Gospel to people. But let us imitate the true way of the Master by being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's preparation in the person's life before we ever arrive on the scene, and then seek to be a part of what He is doing.

Again, an opportunity may only allow us to be the one who shakes someone up—pointing out that they are lost without God. A sensitivity to the Holy Spirit may cause us to refuse to give them more if their response reveals to us that it would be

**⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me;
¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;
¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
John 16:8-11**

throwing pearls before swine at that time to say anything more (cf. Acts 13:45-46). Let us be careful to be in tune with the Holy Spirit's work in their lives of convicting them of sin—trusting that someone else will come along (or perhaps we ourselves at another occasion) to give them the glorious truth that if they will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ they will be saved.

I believe I can trace the following quote (though I do not claim it is a word-for-word quote) to something I read from William MacDonald many years ago: "It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus, for the message is only for those who know they are lost and desire to be made right with God." Before the good news that one only needs to believe on the Lord Jesus to be saved, one must sense his genuine state and desperate need of salvation—and then desire to be made right with God more than anything else. The place where the Spirit is working in their lives is the place we want to be found laboring. Consider afresh how these Scriptures testify to this truth:

⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
1 Corinthians 3:6-8

³⁵ Do you not say, "There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! ³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this the saying is true: "One sows and another reaps." ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors. John 4:35-38

However, I would caution anyone from making the mistake of simply saying (according to a popular use of the term "sower"), "I am a sower,

I am never called to reap a soul"—using being a "sower" as an excuse for never giving the invitation which calls one to a decision. For consider that it was a great reaper of souls, the apostle Paul, who referred to himself as a sower ("I planted"). Let us

honestly labor that we might share not only a portion of truth related to the Gospel, but to share in the inviting call of the Spirit of God to "**Come!**"—for the Spirit and the Bride say "**Come!**" (Rev. 21:17). Do not, therefore, say as an excuse that reaping the harvest is for someone else later

(i.e., do not say it is "**still four months and *then* comes the harvest**"), but be ready for the Spirit to lead you to a soul who is already white unto harvest—i.e., do not fail to be a reaper on the occasion by excusing yourself as only being a sower.

Thus: Avoid not only the temptation of thinking that, "Unless I give them the whole ball of wax (so to speak), I have no part in evangelizing"—as well as avoiding the temptation that it is always for someone else to give the invitation to come to Christ. As one who is consecrated to God, seek to honestly discern what the Holy Spirit is doing in the person's life, and then be bold to be in sync with His leading, doing what the opportunity allows for—making the most of the opportunity. Be obedient to the Holy Spirit as the occasion demands, being *God-and sinner-conscious* rather than self-conscious. To labor in such a manner will cause us not only to be in the harvest field ourselves, but to pray for laborers who can do what we cannot do to enter it as well. For though it is true that not everyone is ready for the sickle, it is also true that not everyone can safely wait another four months. The rich young ruler was not ready to "*say the prayer*" just because he asked what he must do in order to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17). Likewise, the Philippian jailer who was about a half a second from hell (ready to fall upon his own sword) could not safely wait another four months (Acts 16:27-30).

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.
Revelation 22:17

³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers are few.

**³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."
Matthew 9:37-38**

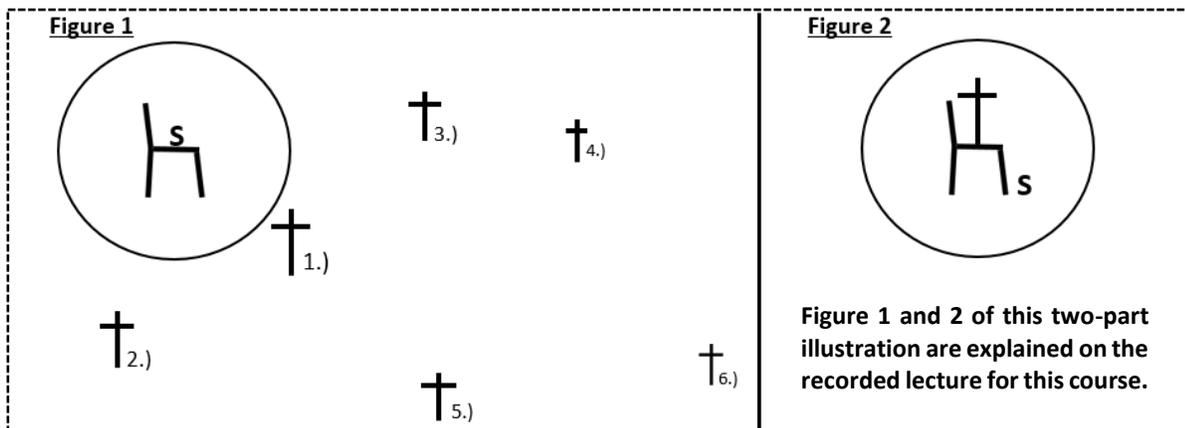
Conclusion:

This little article is unable to constitute a course on the effective sharing of your faith. In fact (even though this is a lengthy article), only a small portion of what the writer set out to convey has been set forth in print. However, though this article does not contain all that one needs to know, it is hoped that this article will be able to serve as an arrow that points the Christian in the general direction which one needs to be traveling. This article has briefly set forth these three points, listed here again in conclusion:

- 1.) **In short, when sharing the faith, use only opportunities.** This is the starting principle. Or we may state this first point this way: Never try to make (force) more out of an opportunity than an opportunity allows.
- 2.) **Being the same person everywhere—i.e., living among the world as one who is truly unashamed of Christ.** Such living will bring Christ near to people—as well as creating potential follow-up opportunities.

3.) Believing (truly believing) that God is warming and preparing people’s hearts before we ever have an encounter with them—and from that truth, seek to be a part of what He is doing in their lives, boldly stepping out as He leads in the encounter.

There is certainly more to say and experience concerning the effective sharing of our faith. For though this article has stressed making the most of every opportunity which we encounter, yet, we should press on to learn how to live in a manner *that actually creates opportunities* as well. May the Lord bless the reader through the truth that has been shared as he studies to show himself as one approved unto God.



Notes: _____
