

Series: Basic Evangelism

Title: Preparing Your Heart for Witnessing

Text: Proverbs 4:24

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I'll never forget my first day of college. In particular, I remember registering for classes. As I scanned the course listing for my major, I came across a word I didn't know. I was excited to take a certain history class, but I was confused when I read that I needed a "prerequisite" before I could enroll. What was a "prerequisite?" I couldn't even pronounce the word. As any good college student would do, I consulted my new collegiate level dictionary. I discovered that a "prerequisite" was "something... necessary to an end or to the carrying out of a function." When it comes to the function of sharing the gospel, there are certain prerequisites. God's people have been commanded to share Christ's message with the entire world (see Mark 16:15), but they must embrace certain heart attitudes if they want to become faithful to share. The Bible says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life" (Proverbs 4:23). In this lesson, we will consider six prerequisites for sharing Christ.

1. **Prayer**

Prayer is a pivotal part of personal evangelism. It has been noted that most great revivals can be directly linked to great prayer efforts. Regarding soul-winning, Charles Spurgeon once said, "The great secret lies, in a large measure, in powerful supplication." The great London preacher's statement is in alignment with the words of Jesus. Speaking to His disciples, He said, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:36-37). The word "pray" appears as a command in the original language of the New Testament. A large influx of souls into the kingdom of God is possible, but His people must make requests. The Lord uses our faithful intercessions in two ways. First, He responds by working in the hearts of men and women, pulling and tugging on their hearts, convicting them of their need for salvation (see John 16:8). Second, He uses our prayers to increase our burden for the lost (see Acts 4:31). It is not ironic that the most fervent proclaimers are usually the most fervent prayers.

2. **A Proper Understanding of Eternal Life**

Some fail to share Christ because they don't have a full appreciation of the gospel. They see the saved as being people who are simply rescued from everlasting hellfire. Jesus regarded salvation as involving so much more. He said, "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent —Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). According to our Lord, eternal life doesn't just entail living forever. It involves a robust, life changing relationship with the one, true God. To effectively share with others, believers must be gripped by this reality. They have been called to introduce people to the living God, not just to sell spiritual fire insurance.

3. **A Proper Understanding of Ministry**

Paul taught that all have a part in gospel proclamation (see 2 Corinthians 5:18). Some are hesitant to be influencers for Christ, because they have a misunderstanding of how ministry works within the body of Christ. They incorrectly assume that witnessing is a task reserved for a select group of super-holy people. They never discover that the Lord has gifted each of His people with unique spiritual abilities. The Lord has given each a special endowment to either speak truth, serve, teach, encourage, give, lead, or show compassion (see Romans 12:6-8). He intends for the outworking of these gifts to contribute to the overall work of making disciples.

4. An Obedient Heart

In John 14:21, Jesus said, “The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him.” Our Lord’s words were given to His disciples shortly before His crucifixion. He desired to share a secret of effective Christian living. For them to experience the full abundance of Christ’s life, they needed to obey His teachings. When they did, they would receive a deeper, more meaningful manifestation of His presence. This is what Jesus meant when He said “the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father.” He didn’t mean that we can earn God’s love by our obedience, He meant that we experience more of it. When our souls are in alignment with Him in this way, we are naturally more equipped, eager and energized to do what He desires. This includes sharing the gospel.

5. Compassion

Compassion is another critical concept associated with witnessing. Those who share the gospel do so because they care about others. They have a concern about their eternal destination and their earthly joy. Those who know the forgiveness and life of Jesus will live with God in a perfect place forever. On top of that, they have a better existence in the here and now, since they have true, meaningful life in Jesus (see John 10:10). If believers want to become better at influencing others for Christ, they must become more concerned about both the earthly and eternal wellbeing of others. Jesus Himself had such a concern. In describing an occasion in which He ministered to a great crowd, Scripture says, “He stepped ashore, He saw a huge crowd, felt compassion for them, and healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). The apostle Paul had a similar empathy and pity towards unbelievers (see Romans 9:1-3 and 10:1-2). When God’s people truly care about others, they will be more motivated to minister. In addition, others will notice their concern, and potentially become more interested in Christ.

6. Personal Consecration

Since the beginning of time, the Lord has ordained that He works mightily among those who live according to His standards (see Genesis 3:22-24). He cannot compromise His character. Under the Mosaic Law, only the cleanest and choicest vessels were allowed to be used in worship (see Leviticus 1:3 and 10:8-10). Still in the church age, God desires to work through clean vessels. If our lives are stained by sin, others can’t see the image of Jesus within us. This is why Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should

lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men" (Matthew 5:13).