



ISSUE

22.15

April 12, 2020

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

The Church and Evangelism

By Kyle Pope

The Lord's church is people—people who have been brought out of bondage to sin and into a covenant relationship with God in Christ. This opportunity for liberation, when properly appreciated, is something the Christian values, cherishes, and joyously wants to share with those still in bondage. The Bible calls this message of freedom **“the gospel”** (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:11), from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning literally “good message.” One who shares this message is **“an evangelist”** (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5), and from these concepts we draw our English word *evangelism*, referring to the work and process of sharing the message of the gospel with the lost. To best carry out this work, we must understand some things about it.

1. Evangelism isn't selling something. While some skills useful in salesmanship can be helpful in sharing the gospel, we must recognize the differences. Evangelism is leading someone to whole-hearted surrender to the will of God. Jesus said, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”** (Matt. 16:24, NKJV). We are not selling a product but inviting souls into a relationship. It's more like a marriage proposal than closing a sale.

2. Evangelism isn't just the work of preachers or the church collectively.

An evangelist shares the gospel with each lesson he preaches and every opportunity he has to win souls. A church should work to find souls in need of Christ and act to address those needs. However, it is a mistake to see evangelism as solely the work of the full-time preacher or the organized collective efforts of a congregation. If I appreciate the salvation I find in Christ I will talk to others about it. Aquila and Priscilla explained the gospel to Apollos (Acts 18:26). Andrew brought his brother to Jesus (John 1:41). Peter taught that the believing

wife can win her unbelieving husband to the Lord (1 Pet. 3:1). The Samaritan woman told her neighbors, **“Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did”** asking them, **“Could this be the Christ?”** (John 4:29). All Christians can do what they did.

3. It's not about having the perfect technique.

Some are intimidated by the thought of evangelism because they fear they won't know the right words to say. Certainly, we should work to develop a mature understanding of Scripture as we talk to others about the truth (Heb. 5:12-14), but that doesn't mean we can't share our faith unless we “have all the answers.” The power of the message of salvation in Christ does not rest in human wisdom or smooth words said in just the right way (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4). It rests in the message itself. Peter taught that we are, **“born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”** (1 Pet. 1:23).

With these points in mind, let us ask a few questions about what the Bible teaches about the church's role in evangelism.

1. Who performed the work of evangelism? This question must be considered from two perspectives: God's part and man's part. For example, in Corinth Paul describes it, **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase”** (1



Olsen Park Church of Christ

Cor. 3:6). Paul taught the Philippians that when Christians serve God, in all things, **“it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”** (Phil. 2:13). So, in one sense evangelists such as Paul and Apollos engaged in this work, but the results could not properly be credited to them because it was God working through them. Not by compulsion, or miraculously manipulating people’s minds, but through His word He gave the increase.

On man’s part, who performed this work? As noted above, every individual Christian can, **“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 Pet. 3:15). The Holy Spirit offers some restrictions on the different ways men and women can do this. In the church assembly women cannot speak (1 Cor. 14:34-35). In general conduct, a woman cannot teach over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-12), but she can discuss spiritual things with men (Acts 18:26-28) and teach other women and children (2 Tim. 1: 5; Titus 2:3-5).

Some men, like Paul and Apollos dedicate themselves to this work on a regular basis. Sometimes, an evangelist did this independent of any support or association with a local church. Barnabas sought out Paul independent of any commission from a local church (Acts 9:26-29). Other times, local churches helped the preacher financially and sent him out on a particular assignment to preach in a certain place. The church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on their first preaching journey (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28). We should note, however, that when churches did this they acted directly. They did not send support to a human organization or even another church so they could send them out to preach. We must follow these same patterns today.

2. How did the church spread the gospel? In light all that is seen around us in the world today, we might first answer this by noting what churches in the New Testament did not do. First, they did not alter the message to conform to culture. Although some viewed it as **“foolishness”** and others as a **“stumbling block”** they trusted in it as **“the power of God and the wisdom of God”** (1 Cor. 1:18-25). Second, they did not offer material things as a lure to generate interest in the message. Neither benevolence nor entertainment were used as methods of evangelism. Christians in the first century didn’t put on plays, concerts, movie nights, common meals, or parties to draw unbelievers. Even when individual Christians performed miracles it was not to promote evangelism but to show love or confirm the power of the message.

What the church did to promote the gospel was first, they taught and upheld



Evangelism starts with faithful service to God. The church characterized by sinful behavior compromises its influence and can never hope to spread the gospel. They talked to those around them (cf. John 1:41; Acts 18:26; 1 Pet. 3:1). Second, they supported men who labored in the word. This included elders devoted to this work (1 Tim. 5:17)

the word in their own communities. They lived what they taught. An elder, for example, was to be one holding **“fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict”** (Titus 1:9). He was to have **“a good testimony among those who are outside”** (1 Tim. 3:7).

and evangelists both in local work and working elsewhere (Acts 13:1-3; Phil. 4:15-16). It wasn't complicated. It didn't demand any grand superstructure or empire-wide cooperative efforts. Through this simple yet powerful approach the gospel spread throughout the world as it continues to spread today among faithful churches who love the Lord and rejoice in the “good message” of salvation in Christ. (Acts 18:26).



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