

The Great Giveaway

A course in promoting the gospel

01 Players in God's Passion #2

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What ideas, feelings, thoughts come to mind when you think of the word 'evangelism' or 'evangelist'?
- What has been your own experience when it comes to sharing your faith in Christ with others?

INTRODUCTION

*Last week we saw that the salvation of others is, first and foremost, God's great passion. This is a mission he wants **us** to be involved in. From here on in we're going to be focussing on the role **we're** to play in God's mission.*

1) THE NATURE OF OUR MISSION

We're going to begin by looking at a number of underlying principles that ought to guide our thoughts and actions as we reach out to others (see points I-III below).

PRINCIPLE I. That Christians are to seek the salvation of others

Read 1 Corinthians 10:33 – 11:1.

- What is the example Paul wants the Corinthians (and us) to follow? *(Living in such a way as to lead people to salvation; for Paul that meant being sensitive to the interests of others and, where necessary, being socially 'flexible'. If you look at the context, Paul is talking about whether or not Christians can eat with pagans when the food they eat might have been sacrificed to idols. Paul's argument is that if by eating with pagans there is a chance some might hear and believe the gospel, then don't worry about whether the food was sacrificed to idols or not. Can you think of a modern equivalent today?)*
- How did Jesus live in a way that showed he was interested in the salvation of others? Can you think of some specific examples? *(eg. he spent time with tax collectors and sinners, even though it meant he, himself, was accused by the Jewish religious leaders of being a drunkard & a glutton, Matt. 11:19)*
- What are the implications for your life of following Paul and Jesus' example?

The first principle underlying our thinking about outreach is that all Christians are expected to live in a way that seeks the salvation of others. The exact means by which this salvation is passed on to others is not clear from the Corinthians passage. We'll need to look elsewhere for that; and that leads us to our second principle.

PRINCIPLE II. Salvation comes only through the gospel message

Read Romans 10:13-15.

- How, according to this passage, are men and women saved? (*By calling on the name of the Lord. You might like to look up Peter's sermon in Acts 4; in v. 12 he says a similar thing to Paul. You might want to press people about what it means to "call upon the name of the Lord"*)
- What is the means by which this salvation is passed on and received? (*it is preached, heard and believed*)
- Does this mean we all have to be 'preachers' of the gospel message?

Based on points I and II above it is **not the case** that Christian mission is all about **preaching** the gospel, only that it is about **promoting** the gospel. When you pray for others to hear the gospel, for instance, you are both seeking the salvation of others and acknowledging that salvation comes only through the gospel. Thus, prayer (of this type) is every bit as much a part of Christian mission (to promote the gospel) as telling the gospel to others. In fact, we'll soon discover that the New Testament lists a whole range of activities which promote the gospel without necessarily proclaiming it.

PRINCIPLE III. Christian mission is all about promoting the gospel in what we do and say

- Imagine you were given the task of promoting a new product to help people give up smoking or to lose weight (you choose). Assuming you were personally convinced of the effectiveness of this product, how would you go about promoting it in the wider community?
- Are there any principles here that could help us in our promotion of the gospel?

2) HINDRANCES TO OUR MISSION

Next week we're going to look at what the New Testament says about the various ways we can promote the gospel (we won't just rely on modern marketing techniques!). Before we do that, however, let's think about some of the things that stand in our way as we try to promote the gospel.

- What factors make it difficult for us, or hinder our desire to promote the gospel? (*See points a – e of 'Hindrances to our mission' (attached) for suggestions. You might like to discuss some of these if not already mentioned*)

CONCLUSION

As a group, or in pairs, brainstorm ways in which you (or we, as a church) could:

- overcome these and other hindrances, and;
- promote the gospel

Be imaginative, lateral and practical. Create a list.

Make sure you pass these ideas on to your church leaders.

Next week: Promoting the gospel: gospel proclamation and gospel partnership.