

The Great Giveaway

A course in promoting the gospel

03 Promoting the gospel

DISCUSSION STARTER

- Think of some well-known examples of ‘partnerships’ from the world of sport, business, the arts etc (eg. the ‘Oarsome Foursome’ – rowers; Matthew Hayden & Justin Langer – cricketers; Tenzing Norgay & Edmund Hillary – Everest conquerors; Monty Python – comedy team; Sass & Bide – fashion designers). What advantages does working in partnership with others have over simply working on your own?

INTRODUCTION

*In the last couple of weeks we've focussed on **the foundations** for our involvement in God's mission. We've seen that God is passionate about his mission and how that passion ought to inform our own involvement in mission. Last week we saw that all Christians are called to promote the gospel in all we do and say. Today we're going to get specific; we're going to consider the range of activities which the New Testament identifies as 'gospel-promoting activities'. We'll do this under two headings: i) Gospel proclamation (otherwise known as 'evangelism') and ii) Gospel partnership (sometimes called 'outreach').*

1) GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

- How would you define the word ‘evangelism’? What place does ‘evangelism’ have in the life of the ordinary Christian?

*In the New Testament the word ‘evangelism’ (Greek - euangelizomai) means to “preach good news”. ‘Evangelism’ does not refer to **every** activity that promotes the gospel or leads others to salvation. It refers to just one activity, the most crucial one, that of proclaiming the gospel to those who haven't heard.*

Look up the following passages from Luke's Gospel: 1:19, 2:10, 3:18, 4:18, 4:43

- Each of these passages use the same Greek word from which we get the word ‘evangelise’ / ‘evangelism’. What do they tell us about the content of the ‘news’ that is preached?
- What does Luke 4:18 & 4:43 tell us about the place of ‘evangelism’ in Jesus' ministry?
- Why do you think ‘evangelism’ is the most important gospel promoting activity?

In the New Testament ‘evangelism’ is a task that specific people were appointed to. For instance, in his lifetime, Jesus appointed others to join him in his task of evangelism (Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-9). The risen Jesus, also, continues to send out individuals for this task; they are referred to as ‘evangelists’.

Look up Ephesians 4:11-13¹

- What do we learn about ‘evangelists’ from this passage? (Evangelists, like prophets & pastor-teachers, are a gift to the church, appointed by Christ himself; their role is to build up the church (v. 12); an important inference, therefore, is that not all people in the church are evangelists, just some)
- Based on our definition of ‘evangelism’ above (i.e. preaching the good news), list a few ways in which an ‘evangelist’ today could go about the task of ‘evangelism’ (one to one – on a bus or aeroplane; in a small group situation or around the dinner table at a dinner party; speaking to an audience. You could even mention two examples from Acts of ‘evangelists’ in action: in Acts 8:26ff Philip ‘evangelises’ the Ethiopian eunuch; in Acts 17:16ff Paul ‘evangelises’ the many gathered in the Areopagus in Athens)
- Do you know any ‘evangelists’? Could you be one?

¹ There are only 2 other references in the New Testament to ‘evangelists’; they are Acts 21:8 & 2 Timothy 4:5.

2) GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP

*It's important to understand that 'evangelism' is not the sum total of gospel promotion. While it is at the heart of gospel promotion, the New Testament lists a **whole range of other activities** which also promote the gospel. These might be called 'gospel-partnership', since when combined with gospel-proclamation, they form an invaluable alliance that spreads the gospel and leads others to salvation.*

- Each group of passages below relates to one gospel-promoting activity. What is that activity? **Leaders: divide the passages up among your group and ask people to report back. Refer to the relevant section from *The Great Giveaway* (see additional page below) to help tease out the various gospel-promoting activities.**
 - A. Matthew 9:36-38; Ephesians 6:19; 1 Timothy 2:1-6
 - B. 1 Corinthians 9:14; Philippians 4:14-19;
 - C. 1 Corinthians 10:27-11:1
 - D. Matthew 5:14-16; Titus 2:10
 - E. 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:2-6
- Identify at least one practical example of each of the 5 gospel-promoting activities above.
- Looking back through A-E above, which do you find hardest/easiest? Is there one, in particular, that you feel you need to work on?

CONCLUSION

Read through the following 'Action points'. Choose 3 which you can put into action this coming week. Next week we'll discuss how we all went.

Action points

1. Spend 10 minutes this week praying for more gospel-proclaimers and for their success. Spend another 10 minutes praying for three people you know who do not yet believe.
2. Consider whether or not you are an evangelist. In one paragraph write down why you think so, and then ask a Christian friend if they would agree. Also write down the names of 1 or 2 others you think might be evangelists and then encourage them in that task.
3. Set aside some \$\$ and give it to a person or project involved in evangelism (other than to the leader of this course!).
4. Think of your circle of friends/acquaintances. How might you enhance your social flexibility with those that do not yet know Christ. Write down your ideas. Do them.
5. Think of three expressions of practical love ('good works' – Matt 5:16) that you can do for those who don't yet believe. Do them.
6. Consider which are the most commonly asked religious/spiritual questions amongst those you know who do not yet believe. Write them down and bring them next week.

End by identifying, and praying for, at least one person who you would like to be saved. Share this with the group and commit to praying for each other in the weeks ahead.

03 Promoting the gospel – Additional information

I) How do you spot the evangelists?

Chances are, some of those doing this course will have been given to your church for this task. So here are some suggestions as to how to work out who the evangelists are:

Desire – s/he will have a *desire* to explain the gospel message to others.

Clarity – s/he will be able to explain the gospel *clearly*.

Maturity – like any person who performs a ministry for the church (a Bible Study leader for instance) an evangelist will be a godly and mature Christian.

Affirmation – just as with Bible Study leaders, an evangelist will be recognised and affirmed by a congregation for the task of evangelism.

NOTE: But please don't misunderstand the above emphasis on evangelists. The fact that Christ has given "some to be evangelists" shouldn't at all discourage the rest of us from doing whatever we can to tell the gospel to others. Each one of us can share in the privilege of telling the gospel – as our personalities, abilities and opportunities allow – confident that, as we do, God's spirit will be working through us.

II) Gospel-promoting activities

A) **PRAYING** (Matt 9:36-38; Eph 6:19; 1 Tim 2:1-6) This is the *hidden* mission activity. We are urged to pray: 1) for *more* proclaimers; 2) for the *success* of these proclaimers; 3) for the salvation of our *non-Christian* neighbours and leaders.

B) **PROVIDING** (1 Cor 9:14; Phil 4:14-19) This is the *practical* mission activity (not that the others are impractical). Giving money to projects and people involved in evangelism may not seem glamorous, but it is vital and effective. We must begin to see our wallet/purse as a tool of God's mission.

C) **MIXING** (1 Cor 10:27-11:1) This is the *relational* mission activity. In the ancient Greek world, most of the meat sold at the market had previously been dedicated to a pagan god (a demon). This was a very thorny issue for any Christian that received an invitation from friends or relatives to attend a pagan banquet. Nevertheless, Paul urges the Corinthians to adopt a flexible attitude towards enjoying such meals. Just as Paul's preaching flexibility was designed to make it easier for people to be saved (1 Cor 9:19-23), so the Corinthians' social flexibility (even to the extent of eating 'demon-meat') should be oriented toward their neighbours' salvation. After all, didn't Christ wine and dine with 'sinners' (like Zacchaeus: Luke 19)? Paul's hope here is probably that the relationships, conversations or even invitations to church which might result from such mixing between Christians and non-Christians might actually lead others to Jesus.

This, of course, does not mean we are free to participate in immorality. In fact, it is precisely as we live godly lives in the midst of an unbelieving world that 'mixing' takes on greater mission significance.

D) **LIVING** (Matt 5:14-16; Titus 2:10) This is perhaps the most *fundamental* mission activity. The observably good life of God's people makes the gospel 'attractive' to those who don't yet believe. More than that, it may draw them into 'glorifying/praising' the Father with us.

Someone who lives this sort of life in full view of those that don't yet believe is likely to receive questions (or criticisms) from time to time. We are all to be ready for this (more on this next week).

E) **ANSWERING** (1 Pet 3:15; Col 4:2-6) This is the *verbal* mission activity. We are urged to respond to the questions and/or criticisms of those that don't believe. On occasion this may lead to full blown 'evangelism' (a telling of the gospel), especially if someone asks, "How do I become a Christian?", or "What is Christianity all about?" Usually, however, it will involve less overt and less comprehensive responses. These are still extremely valuable occasions for promoting the gospel. Because it is principally God's mission – not ours – he is more than able to use our small contributions for his greater purposes.