

Simple Evangelism #12  
**Give People Hope**  
By Bill Denton

**INTRODUCTION**

A. Tonight I want us to continue thinking about the idea of simple evangelism

1. If my count is right, this is the 12<sup>th</sup> lesson in this series
2. In each lesson, I've tried to point you toward simple, easy things we can do to open doors, focus on the positive, and make it possible for people to actually hear the message of the gospel
3. We need to become convinced once again that evangelism is possible, hard maybe, but possible because it happens best when the whole church is geared to sharing the good news of Jesus

B. So, one more element in this discussion of simple evangelism – we must give people hope

1. That one is so common-sense, so simple in concept it's a wonder we need to mention it at all
2. But the problem is that without meaning to do it, we can completely fail to give people hope
3. Illustration  
Hope stands as the supreme gift a preacher can offer a congregation while speaking from the shadowy valleys.  
*Daniel T. Hans in Leadership, Vol. 10, no. 1*
4. I thought that was a terrific quote, but it's terrific for some very important reasons
  - a. a lot of people are afraid – problems, future, you name it!
  - b. a lot of people are failures – sin, relationships, life!
  - c. a lot of people feel stuck and going nowhere
  - d. they don't think things are going to get better
  - e. add shame, embarrassment, guilt, knowing they've disappointed the important people in their lives
  - f. toss in the very real issues of aging, health, death
  - g. no wonder people hurt and have no hope

C. The truth is that the church has one of the most important missions in all the world – we get to show people how to have hope

1. If we can do that, it will go a long way toward simplifying evangelism
2. Hope thrills the heart and creates a desire for God – let's see how

## I. UNDERSTAND THE BASIS FOR OUR HOPE

### A. Illustration

. . . in American society, hope consists of a half-hearted optimism unsure of its basis. It has no anchor. It feebly trusts in one ideology after another, from Marxism to capitalism, materialism to idealism, religiosity to secularism, legalism to license. Or its hopes are more clearly focused but are in objects that cannot satisfy the hopes: a career, business opportunities, marriage, children, money, security, a new home, and so on.

The Bible, in contrast, reveals a hope that consists of unrelenting, confident attachment to the future in light of God's promises. It gives us an alternative to today's "grasping-at-straws" mentality. Christians need not live with constant conflict between hope and doubt.<sup>1</sup>

1. The writer identifies some of our problems with hope
  - a. it's a weak, feeble thing
  - b. it chases after things that can't deliver
2. people want and need something better

### B. Illustration

The Good Friday service in Dampara Baptist Church, Chittagong, Bangladesh, was packed. Little children sat on the floor in the aisles and across the front of the church. Rows of people stood in the back, craning their necks to see the crucifixion scene as depicted in the "Jesus Film." Weeping and gasps of unbelief could be heard in the shocked hush as Jesus was crucified. As the Bengalis watched, they were feeling the agony of Jesus' pain and the disappointment of the disciples.

In that emotional moment, one young boy in the crowded church suddenly cried out, "Do not be afraid. He gets up again! I saw it before."

A small boy's encouraging cry gave new hope to the viewers of the film. "He is risen!" is the cry that gives new hope to all.

*William D. Barrick, Christian Reader, Vol. 35, no. 2.*

1. I first read that years ago, and immediately thought it was one of the best, most powerful observations ever made – all by a young boy
2. I've always wondered why Christians miss this point

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<sup>1</sup>*Discipleship Journal : Issue 28.*, electronic ed. (Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress, 1999).

### C. We need to know the basis of our hope

1. In Acts the concept of hope, other than its purely secular use . . . always refers to the hope of Israel as culminating in ‘the resurrection of the Christ’<sup>2</sup>
2. Paul said a lot about hope, but on a few occasions, he focused his audience tightly on the basis of our hope
  - a. 1 Timothy 1:1 -- (Paul speaks about) Christ Jesus, who is our hope, NASU
  - b. Colossians 1:25-27 -- 25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. NASU

### D. Hope is a very specific kind of thing for Christians

1. It is based on Jesus, the one who died and was raised again
  - a. he provides forgiveness of sins, salvation, redemption and more
  - b. his resurrection keeps pointing us to a confidence of the future
2. More, the death and resurrection of Jesus is designed to make it possible for Christ to live in us – Paul called that the hope of glory

### E. Christian hope is directly tied both to the resurrection of Jesus and to the promise that comes to us concerning the resurrection

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 -- 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.
2. Don’t miss this one – it’s all about having a hope that others don’t have

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<sup>2</sup>Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). 403.

## II. HOPE MUST ALSO BE PRACTICAL

A. What I mean by “practical” is that hope must go beyond a theological understanding – it must translate into something that empowers life

1. We sing songs like “My Hope Is Built” or “The Solid Rock”

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

When darkness veils His lovely face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil

His oath, His covenant, His blood  
Support me in the whelming flood  
When all around my soul gives way  
He then is all my hope and stay

When He shall come with trumpet sound  
O may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless to stand before the throne

On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground in sinking sand

2. The question is do we just sing to have something to do, or do our songs reflect something we're living by?
  - a. the song says “my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness”
  - b. it says in dark times and storms, we've got an anchor
  - c. it says when everything around me gives way, he's our hope and stay
  - d. at the judgment, it says we've got one claim – in Christ, we are faultless
  - e. so we stand on Christ the solid rock – all else is sinking sand

B. This is something we need to better communicate among ourselves, and it's definitely something we need to communicate to others

1. The question for us is do we know how to do it?
2. More, are we doing it?

### C. How to give people hope

1. By teaching, preaching, and living the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - a. a focus on Jesus' death, burial and resurrection
  - b. never getting sidetracked by popular doctrinal issues, but always focused on that which gives hope
  
2. By treating people as if hope is possible
  - a. sinners can be forgiven
  - b. failure, sin, etc., can be overcome
  - c. those who don't know God can learn about him
  - d. those who don't know how to live can learn
  - e. lifestyles can be changed
  
3. More importantly, whatever we do to get things in this life on track with God's will, ultimately, it's eternity that counts
  - a. that's why death is not the end
  - b. that's why we don't get too focused on the here and now
  - c. the point is, eternal life and a home in heaven is what we want people to hope for
  
4. By practicing hope in everything we do
  - a. does your life evidence hope?
  - b. does our worship evidence hope?
  - c. does our attitude toward life evidence hope?
  - d. does your attitude toward other people evidence hope?
  - e. we can easily miss the importance of hope in all these things and more, and if we do, it hurts the message of the gospel

### Conclusion

#### A. I once heard a great definition of hope

"Hope is desire coupled with expectation"

#### B. Real hope is not wishful thinking; it is a firm desire and a confident expectation

1. Jesus died and rose again – we start there
2. He did all of that for you – to forgive your sins, and give you the gift eternal life
3. Whatever happens in life, keep focused on Jesus and what he provides because these are the permanent things
4. All the rest is temporary

#### C. Invitation