

Simple Evangelism #16
Speak Up!
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration

1. St. Francis of Assisi
“Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words”

2. Hal Linhardt (humorously referring to himself as Hal of Kansas City)
“Preach the gospel at all times, and you must use words”

B. Linhardt goes on to say this:

1. Most of us have heard the pithy saying of the gentle monk, St. Francis. To give St. Francis the benefit of the doubt, I understand his exhortation to make sure you're livin' what you're preachin'. But alas!

For centuries his words have provided an 'escape route from obedience' to millions of Christians. Many in the church have seized upon his words to mean, *"I witness with my life, therefore I do not feel the need to speak about Jesus Christ."* And with one broad brush, the fearful, the lazy and the carnal sweep away the testimony of the entire Bible...i.e. the use of words to tell about God.

Our human nature always wants the easy route. It is no exception in evangelism. We want to do evangelism because it is commanded by our Lord, but we do not want to speak directly to unbelievers about Jesus because we fear man more than God, love comfort more than obedience and are distracted by the world rather than fixing our gaze on Jesus and His word. Furthermore, our fallen nature and the devil team up to persuade us that simple words of truth spoken in love come across as "crass, religious, traditional and ineffective".

2. Wrong trends left unchallenged become the accepted and even venerated church standards until God rescues us from the error of our ways. (*Listen closely ... 'church history' students are saying "Amen".*) This 'silence trend' in evangelism has been unchallenged so long I fear it has ensconced itself in our thinking as if it was a legitimate Bible teaching. It is time for a reformation of common sense based upon Biblical example regarding how we reach the lost. It is time to speak up for Jesus Christ. A Little Greek Lesson Evangel means 'Good News'. Evangelism means 'Telling Good News'. Evangelist means 'A Person Who Tells Good News'. There must be words about Jesus Christ for evangelism to take place. Words about Jesus may come in many forms such as the printed page, one on one conversations, film, video, DVD, web pages, TV, radio, etc. But regardless, no words, no evangelism.

The angel said to Cornelius, *"Call for Peter for he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and your household"* (Acts 11:14).

C. This series is titled, “Simple Evangelism” not “Easy Evangelism”

1. I do believe that if we simplify our evangelistic efforts, they will be easier than they usually are, but that doesn’t mean “easy”
2. The truth is that eventually, all our efforts come down to telling others about Jesus
 - a. this is why we open doors
 - b. this is why we build trusting relationships
 - c. this is why we give respect to others
 - d. this is why we do all that I’ve talked about in this series – so that eventually, we have an audience of willing listeners who will hear what we have to say

D. Tonight I want us to think about the responsibility to speak up and tell others the gospel of Jesus Christ

I. THE GREAT COMMISSION HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT COMMUNICATING VERBALLY

A. Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NASU

B. Mark 16:15-16

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. NASU

C. In both passages, the emphasis is on teaching and preaching

1. Teaching and preaching necessarily use words
2. Whether spoken, written, or even signed to the deaf, human communication depends on words to clearly and precisely relate information from one person to another

D. Can a person’s example of life be an important element in bringing the lost to Jesus – absolutely! But your example alone cannot tell the message of Jesus; you must use words!

E. It is impossible for the church to fulfill the great commission passages unless we do it with words

1. There are many ways to use words, but use them we must
2. The modern church must rethink whether or not we are actually communicating the message of the gospel – it demands words

II. REMEMBER THE ACRONYM KISS

A. There is more than one way to use this acronym

1. Standard way – Keep It Simple Stupid!
2. Here's a way for the church to use it – Keep It Simple Saints!

B. We make a lot of mistakes trying to convert the lost

1. We need to help people understand the problem of sin, but the mistake we make is to get so involved in battling all the sins, the religious error, the false religions, the moral and ethical issues – on and on – that we get off message and never get around to the gospel
 - a. while we can and should address the sins of our times, the fact is one will never get around to addressing them all
 - b. we need to make the point, help people understand the problem of their own sins, and then move on to the answer
2. The answer to sin is far more important than discussing every possible sin that might occur
3. Keep is simple – make the point and get on to the answer in Jesus

C. In the past, we've tried to convert people to the church more than we tried to convert them to Jesus

1. I know people who insisted in covering mountains of information about the church before getting to the gospel
2. We need to understand that there is a priority in teaching people
 - a. let's get people saved first
 - b. then we can follow up on the never-ending job of growing them into maturity and into understanding
3. Keep it simple – help people have faith in Jesus, get them saved, then we can keep on teaching – which is exactly what the great commission passages tell us to do

D. We've tried to fix all the doctrinal problems, correct all the misunderstanding of scripture, and more

1. We've treated people like nothing they've ever learned from any other source than us must be abandoned or overcome
2. A lot of what they learned might be just fine
3. Keep it simple, focus on the gospel, and move forward

III. KNOW WHAT TO SAY

A. One unfortunate statement made by people regarding their ability to teach the gospel to the lost – “I don’t know enough” or “I can’t teach”

1. That identifies some possibilities we need to correct
 - a. people truly don’t know the gospel
 - 1) some of that is because they’re thinking about all the additional things we’ve attached to the gospel message
 - 2) how is it possible for someone who is a Christian to not know the gospel?
 - b. people are stuck on “formal” methods like classroom teaching or pulpit preaching
 - 1) sure we need people in classrooms and pulpits
 - 2) but not everybody – and in fact, many effective teachers of the gospel use very different methods
 - c. they’re falling back on their example of life instead of words
 - 1) don’t discount the power of a good example
 - 2) don’t think that your example effectively teaches others
2. The truth is that any Christian can talk to someone who is not
 - a. we’ve just got to learn how to speak up
 - b. we’ve got to develop a sense of responsibility for the people whose lives we are able to impact

B. So what do you need to be able to say?

1. You need to be able to talk about the problem of sin and that it causes us to be separated from God
2. You need to be able to talk about what God did to solve our problem
 - a. incarnation – that Jesus, the Son of God, came into our world to live a perfect life, and become God’s answer to sin
 - b. crucifixion – Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice, shedding his blood to provide forgiveness of sins
 - c. resurrection – Jesus rose from the dead, proving all his claims, and giving us the hope of eternal life
 - d. ascension – Jesus ascended back to the Father, and continues to serve as our great high priest, enabling us to serve faithfully
 - e. second coming – he will return, raise the dead, judge the world, and give us an eternal home with him

3. You need to be able to tell people how to respond in faith to what God has done for them
 - a. talk about the need to believe in Jesus as God's Son, Savior, and Lord
 - b. talk about the call to repent of sins
 - c. talk about the call to confess our belief in Jesus to others
 - d. talk about the call to be baptized into the death of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - e. talk about the call to walk daily with the Lord for the rest of life
4. None of this is complicated, but you have to use words to get the message across

CONCLUSION

- A. Let's employ all the methods possible to break down barriers and create friendly, respectful connections with people
 1. This series has lasted about six months, and most of what I've said relates ways to do just that
 2. Use anything you can to get people to listen to the gospel of Jesus
- B. But at some point, speak up! Tell them about Jesus!
- C. Invitation