

POWER

“the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)

Evangelism – The Great What?

Evangelism is one of the great opportunities that God has granted to His children. How wonderful is His design to allow us, sinners who were saved by the blood of Christ, to help others receive the great blessings that are in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). There is truly no greater joy than to see a soul rescued from the fires of hell and brought to a right relationship with God.

Tragically, not all Christians see evangelism as a great blessing. It is often viewed as a burden and an obligation. Rather than the great commission, they treat evangelism as either the great omission or the great permission.

The Great Omission

The person who displays this attitude toward evangelism focuses on the pessimistic reasons why evangelism won't work in his particular situation and the reasons why he doesn't teach others as he should. The person with this attitude knows all of the resources and techniques that are available to help in evangelism and can recite their reasons why each of them just doesn't work – despite what others say. While showing such great expertise in criticism, those with this attitude can't be bothered to use their “great knowledge” to develop tools for themselves (or others) that they feel will truly work.

Some congregations have embraced this attitude and have become satisfied with the status quo. They don't want to evangelize locally, because it might bring in some “less desirable” people or make their congregation “too big.” They don't support domestic missionaries since they should be willing to work and take care of themselves. They don't support foreign missionaries because they can't see what's going on and be sure that every single penny of their money is used exactly as they see fit. If the missionary doesn't show enough baptisms, they're lazy, if they have too many baptisms, they aren't teaching thoroughly enough. They don't support those who visit and oversee foreign missionaries because the cost of travel is too high. They still haven't found the perfect situation in which they would be comfortable spending the Lord's money. And they probably never will.

How do we overcome this attitude? First, we need to fully realize that the power in evangelism is the Gospel, it alone has the power to change lives (Romans 1:16). Any resource or technique doesn't have power in and of itself, rather its power to convert souls comes exclusively from the power of the word of God. Second, we need to understand that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) is a commandment, just like every other commandment. We can't pick and choose which commandments we choose to follow as we see fit. Third, God is the one who gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6-7). We're responsible to plant and water to the best of our abilities and allow the word of God to work in the hearts of men. Jesus taught that we are to sow generously, to those who will willingly receive and accept His word and to those who won't (Matthew 13:3-9).

THIS ISSUE

EVANGELISM

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THE GREAT WHAT?

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EDITORS

MARK TESKE
AARON COZORT

ELDERS

LARRY EVERSON
CON LAMBERT
VERN SCHRIMSHER

CONTACT US

PHONE: 662-393-2690

FAX: 662-342-7152

EMAIL: POWER@SOUTHAVENCOC.ORG

WEB: WWW.SOUTHAVENCOC.ORG/POWER

The Great Permission

The person who displays this attitude toward evangelism will allow (and even help) others to evangelize, but doesn't talk to others about Jesus. This person often points to their personal inadequacies and sees them as reasons why they are "excused" from this commandment. Maybe they don't see themselves as being as outgoing as someone else, or as knowledgeable in the Scriptures as another, so they conclude that there is probably someone else who is better suited for the job. They conclude that the time that they have spent in studying the Bible has not yet prepared them to complete the task that has been assigned to them by God. Sadly, there are many members of the Lord's church who find themselves in this category.

How do we overcome this attitude? First, we once again need to understand that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) is a commandment. Second, there is a clear expectation within Scripture that we should grow in our knowledge and our ability to teach others. The Hebrew writer rebuked Christians because they ought to have been teachers, but they still hadn't mastered the fundamentals (Hebrews 5:12-13). When a person has truly studied as they should to understand what they needed to do to obey the Gospel, they already have the material to teach others the same thing. We need to study the Word diligently, so that we can give thoughtful answers to those who are outside of Christ (Colossians 4:5-6; I Peter 3:15). Third, we need to understand that we all have different talents (Ephesians 4:15-16) and we should use the talents that we've been given. A person may not be good at speaking to others, but they can leave cards and tracts that will teach others. Many have come to Christ by the efforts of Christians who have selflessly served others in physical ways that have gone on to point them to the Truth. There are no limits to what we can do to help share the Gospel message with others!

The Great Commission

The person who displays this attitude toward evangelism knows that "Go ye" means "Go me!" This person not only does all that they can to encourage others in their evangelistic efforts, but takes the commands of Scripture to heart and does what they can personally. This person rejoices at the salvation of others (John 4:36; Romans 12:15) and does not consider the salvation of another soul to be offensive to them (Matthew 9:10-13). This person is so very focused on souls that they strengthen their own faith while working so hard to serve others.

This issue of the Power Journal includes some ideas and encouragement to help individual Christians and entire congregations to fulfill the commandment to go into all the world with the saving Gospel message. May you be encouraged.

Jesus, Our Teaching Model

W. Timothy Wilkes, Sr., Ph.D.

In the field of education teaching models are abundant; and the field is growing—endeavoring to accommodate the ways we educate ourselves formally, and informally. Jesus Christ is a model to us in many ways; He's our model in suffering (1 Pt. 2:22); He's our model in humility (Php. 2:5-8); He's our model in resisting temptation (Mt. 4:1-10—just to name a few. The Fishers of Men Ministry looks at Jesus as a teaching model, after all, He is the Master Teacher. We ask how did the Lord handle this type situation? How did he accomplish a particular teaching objective? How did he handle confrontation?

One might ask is it really important how we teach, just as long as we teach. Note what Paul said: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col 4:6). Paul says there is a way we "ought" to answer. That implies there's a way we ought not answer. Even though we might tell the truth, it's possible we might tell the truth in a wrong manner. The Lord commands us to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Mt. 10:16). However, sometimes we get this backwards and we're as harmless as rattlesnakes and wise as silly doves when talking to the lost about their souls.

How then should we approach people with the gospel? Jesus did it by asking open questions: (Mt. 21:28-31) "What think ye, a certain man had two sons . . . whether of them did the will of his father?" How should we answer questions? Jesus did it by asking open questions designed to get the person to answer for himself: (Luke 10:26) "What is written in the law? How readest thou? How should we respond when we're asked loaded questions—questions putting us in a judging position? Jesus did it by asking open questions, always pointing to the authority: (Mt. 21:23-24) When they refused to answer His question, He refused to answer theirs. How do we get people to think? Jesus did it with open questions designed to stimulate thinking: (Mt. 16:13-18). How do we get people to commit? Jesus did it with closed questions: (John 11:26).

These are but a few examples of how Jesus taught. How important is looking to Jesus to "equip" ourselves (Eph. 4:11-12) to teach the gospel? The answer to that question is found in this simple open question: "What's more important than the gospel?" (Rom. 1:16). In view of eternity, there's nothing more important. Then why would we not want to model the Master Teacher? Most Christians would affirm that we're to be Christ-like in living, suffering, and humility. Why would we not want to be Christ-like in how we teach?

Want to better equip yourself, or those in your congregation? Contact the Fishers of Men Ministry WWW.FISHERSOFMEN.NET and talk to us about a class.



A New Evangelism

by Tom Mack & Barrett Blackburn

After the final prayer is said, they looked around trying to find a friendly face. Having found this church on Google, it was as good of place as any to start looking for a church to call their home. It wasn't the type of place they had expected, but it definitely was interesting. Where were the instruments? Where was the choir? It's certainly not like what they had grown up with. There were lots of families around and everyone seemed to be enjoying each other's company. But other than a few nods hello, and some "glad-to-meetcha's" everyone seemed to have their own plans. Well, maybe the next church they visit would be different.

It is time for a change.

In 2013, two families at the Brown Trail church of Christ in Bedford, Texas decided it was time for a change. The idea was simple: "If someone goes to all the trouble of getting up on Sunday morning and walks through the doors of our church and we don't try our best to reach out to them, then shame on us." Something motivated them to be at church, so why leave it up to them to do all the work? Friendliness in the pews only gets you so far.

Over the last 18 months, God has blessed Brown Trail with growth, and 5 new members have been added to the kingdom as a direct result of this particular effort, and two other members have come back to the body. But that is not all. They also formed a personal bond to other existing members that helped them grow spiritually.

Why was this experiment in evangelism successful? Some success can be attributed to the personalities present in the two families. However, most of the actions taken seem repeatable by others.

How do you go about it?

If you take only one thing away from this method, it should be "Race to the Living Rooms". It works best when you get out of the pews and into your homes. Why? You get people to open up. People don't open-up much in a chat after church. They open-up a little more if you can get them to go to lunch outside of church. They open up a lot more if you can get them to visit your house. They open up completely if they allow you to visit them at their home. Once people let down their guard, then true dialogue takes place and people bond: it's that simple.

In order to facilitate this, there were three simple phases:

Phase I: Invite them to lunch/dinner after worship and buy their meal.

While it is not absolutely necessary to buy their meal for them, it has been found that this decreases the reluctance to go eat with strangers and you have a much better opportunity to get to know the person in a comfortable, familiar environment.

Phase II: Have a regular standing Bible study, and invite them to attend.

This has been seen to be the biggest impact to new growth. Whether you choose to do it weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, the key is to make it a regular occurrence. Because once you have that, it becomes very simple to say "Hey, we do a Bible study on Saturday Nights. Would you like to come?" There is no awkwardness about the gathering being specifically focused on them, or what to do when you are together. It's a scheduled group event that they can insert themselves into at any time.

In the example at Brown Trail, the families' weekly Bible study consists of dinner, a Bible study, and dessert. This gives opportunity for fellowship and for you to get to know the new visitors on a personal level, something that is very difficult to do when standing around after a worship assembly.

If they have visited several times, and you have a bible class hour at your congregation, catch them as they are entering the building and ask if they are interested in something more personal than just sitting in a classroom or auditorium and listening to someone lecture. They might benefit from something more directed at them where they can get their questions answered, particularly if they are new to the church.

It has also been observed that many congregations don't have classes geared towards adults who are new to Christianity or are not yet Christians. In many cases, they are thrown into the equivalent of a Masters level curriculum, when they are still at the kindergarten level. It's hard for them to be interested in coming when they don't get much out of it to begin with. Studying with them personally will help them grow.

Phase III: Allow them to determine the next steps.

Once they come to gather together with you a few times outside of worship, whether it is at lunches or Bible studies or any social gathering, they usually will give you an idea of how you might be able to help them. Getting involved in their life in a way that is meaningful to them lets them know that you are interested in more than just a "See you Sunday" relationship.

Whether it is helping fill a childcare need, or help getting their car fixed, they know you are someone to call. One new member had doctrinal questions because their families were from denominations, and they didn't know how to answer some of their accusations. Sometimes they just need to feel they are a part of a family. Whatever their need, do your best to get it filled. They will want to be a part of a family that cares about them.

What has been learned from the process?

When it comes to any new effort, there are always going to be growing pains and unexpected results. You learn things that may surprise you or things may be as you expected. Here are some of the things that were learned at Brown Trail:

1. **There were more non-Christian visitors than anyone thought.**

It was assumed by those involved that most of the visitors would be church members “passing through” as they travelled or just moved to the area and were looking for a new church home. However, as the data was analyzed (including people who didn’t come back) the mix of visitors was found to be as follows:

- A. 50% were not affiliated with the church of Christ previously
- B. 20% were church members looking for a new church home
- C. 20% were church members passing through from out of town
- D. 10% were in the wrong place altogether (they found the church using things like Google and were looking for a different type of church)

2. **The 2-family structure for evangelizing visitors has a lot of advantages.**

Start with a friend from church who you already see on a more regular basis than just during assemblies. Having a “partner” creates a good diversity for dialogue without being too many people. It also eases the pressure on each member to remember that they are not bearing the load themselves.

For a congregation of about 350 people like Brown Trail, on Sunday morning you generally are only able to engage with 15-20% of the visitors. In most cases, you are only able to cover about 30% of the floor. However, engaging with the first visitor often prevents you from engaging with additional visitors. Make efforts to seek out the visitors.

3. **Breaking-the-ice isn’t about introducing your-self, it is about getting them beyond the pew.**

This seems to be a vital part of why the program was successful. Most congregations have members who will introduce themselves to visitors. What makes this approach different is asking the visitors to go the next step with you in a way that usually has them saying “yes”.

4. **A regular Bible study makes ice-breaking easier.**

As was said before, if you have a pre-existing Bible study it becomes easier to include new people. They came to the church because they are interested in a relationship with God so why not offer them what they are looking for?

The regular Bible study also generates its own momentum. When coworkers ask about your plans for the weekend, saying you are having a Bible study opens up the easy invitation. You might even find that the visitors have brought their friends along who have never even set foot in a church building.

5. **Different sized groups have different strengths and weaknesses. Use them all.**

One-on-one is intimate and some people need this intimacy to open-up. A Bible study size of about 12 people seems to foster the most discussion. In smaller and larger groups, people tend to keep comments to themselves more. Larger groups give the

benefit of allowing someone to be involved without feeling that the focus is on them.

6. **Prepare for your friendships to change.**

As new people enter your circle of friends, then existing friendships take new shapes. New friendships with visitors who become Christians need to take a lead-role in our lives, but that can’t happen without stealing time away from our existing friends. You don’t have to discard your old friends, but new challenges will always bring some amounts of change.

7. **Work hard to introduce visitors to other families in the church.**

You can’t rely on being the only connection to the church for these visitors or you will find yourself overwhelmed keeping-up with everybody. Try to help foster connections with people outside your core group. Not every personality type will fit with you, so help them find someone to connect with.

Evangelizing visitors can be consistently successful if the effort is there. At Brown Trail church of Christ, these two families found a method that worked for them, and it is hoped that you can use these ideas to find a way to evangelize visitors for yourself. Don’t allow someone who is looking for God to leave without trying to help them find Him.

2015 POWER LECTURESHIP THEME: **Reprove, Rebuke, & Exhort** JULY 26 - 30, 2015

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POWER from the ORIGINAL

“Lost in Translation” is a concept that is true even when we consider the Word of God. Some concepts or words in one language like Greek do not fully translate into another language like English. The POWER from the Original articles will provide nuggets of understanding that will bless the lives of the biblical novice and the biblical teacher alike.

Strive to Enter

by Adam B. Cozort

“And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” (Luke 13:22-24, KJV)

When Jesus is asked whether there will be few people saved, the key word to his answer is the first word he uses. The word “strive” comes from the Greek term *agonizesthe* and it means

“to engage in an athletic contest, to strive, to strive to do something with great intensity and effort, to make every effort to.”¹

When Jesus talks about who is going to be saved, he says it is going to require intense effort and commitment on the part of those who will be saved. It will not be by accident, nor with a passive interest that someone will enter the kingdom of God. In fact, Jesus says that many will seek (from a term meaning - to search, to crave, to demand) to enter and will not be able.

There is no doubt that many people want to go to Heaven, but it is also evident by looking at people’s lives that not many actually want to put forth the effort to be there. We must strive to place ourselves within the kingdom. We must, in sports parlance, “want it more” than the average individual. We must want it to the point that we are willing to do whatever it takes to receive it. Otherwise we will find ourselves on the outside looking in.

Are you striving to enter the gates of the kingdom?

References

1. Rogers, Cleon L., and Cleon L. Rogers. *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1998. 144.

POWER from the PAST

The archive of POWER is a vast storehouse of sound, doctrinal articles from some of the best writers in the brotherhood, past and present. The POWER from the Past articles will provide another generation of readers the opportunity to read the best of the best from previous POWER issues.

God’s Invitation

by Frank Chesser

Man’s problem is sin. God’s solution is the blood of Jesus Christ. The conditions of the gospel constitutes the means by which man appropriates the provisions of grace and blood to his soul. Those who refuse to obey the gospel will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9).

“Come unto me” is God’s invitation through the gospel. Redemption is man’s greatest need. God wants to save man. Hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels,” not man (Matt. 25:41). If only one of God’s offspring was going to be lost, that tragic state would be the result of human volition, not the divine will.

“What must I do to be saved” is the question of the ages. Man’s greatest need is to know the answer to this question. This inquiry inheres in every gospel sermon. No gospel sermon is complete until this question is answered. However, it has become fashionable for preachers to close their sermons without telling the hearers what to do to be saved. They issue God’s “come” without God’s “how.”

What good is preaching on God’s grace without informing man how to respond to grace in the obedience of faith? How effective are sermons on the cross apart from telling man how to appropriate the provisions thereof to his soul by complying with the conditions of the gospel? Why extend God’s invitation without instructing man as to God’s means of responding to the invitation? What is the rationale in preaching so as to motivate man to raise the question, “What must I do to be saved?” and then refusing to give him the answer?

Why would any gospel preacher choose to close a gospel sermon without telling man how to obey the gospel? Imagine a one-time visitor leaving an assembly of the church where the gospel has been preached without ever being told what to do to be saved. How much difference is there in giving the wrong answer to man’s greatest question and not giving any answer at all? It is God’s gospel and God’s invitation, not ours.

This article was originally printed in the October, 1993 issue of POWER



Clifton Angel Sheri Blackwell Dan Cates B.J. Clarke Gary Colley Jim Dearman Lane Dix Chad Dollahite Ben Giselbach Cliff Goodwin Steve Higginbotham
 Phillip Hines Glenn Hitchcock Mike Hixson Becky Honeycutt Bill Irby Robert Jefferies Tony Lawrence Eric Lyons Eric Owens Kathy Pollard Neal Pollard

2015 POWER LECTURESHIP

JULY 26 - 30, 2015

REPROVE, REBUKE, & EXHORT

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Sunday, July 26

- 9:30 am - 10:30 am Jesus: A Case Study of Reproving, Rebuking, and Exhorting..... Glenn Hitchcock
- 10:30 am - 11:30 am 2 Timothy 4:2 – An Overview Robert Jefferies
- 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Christian Relationships: Getting Past the Superficial and into Deeper Relationships.....B.J. Clarke

Monday, July 27

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am Preaching the Word with All Authority – Titus 2:15 Gary Colley
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Developing an Atmosphere Conducive to Growth in the Local Congregation Mike Hixson
- 1:00 am - 12:00 pm Preaching Only Positive Sermons Kills Congregations..... Lane Dix
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Matthew 18 – Going to a Brother in Sin without Gossiping..... Dan Cates
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm Teaching with Meekness – 1 Peter 3:15 Clifton Angel
- Ladies — 2:00 pm Training Up My Children Without Provoking Them to Wrath..... Becky Honeycutt
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Making Christianity Attractive..... Joe Wells

Tuesday, July 28

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am A Case Study of Barnabas..... Chad Dollahite
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Eli: A Case Study in Failing to Discipline Children Eric Lyons
- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm How God Chastises His Children – Hebrews 12:7-11 Rob Whitacre
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Training Up My Child in an Anti-Spanking World Kevin Rutherford
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm “As Many as I Love” (Revelation 3:19): The Proper Motivation for Reproof..... Jim Dearman
- Ladies — 2:00 pm “Angry Words, O Let Them Never.....”..... Sheri Blackwell
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Preaching on the “Taboo” Topics: Modesty, Morality, and Mixed Swimming..... Cliff Goodwin

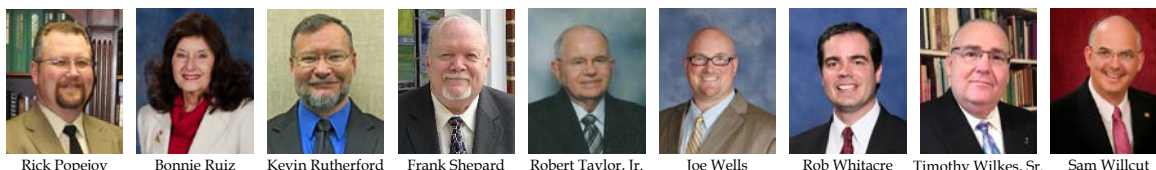
Wednesday, July 29

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue Proverbs 18-21 Bill Irby
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Preaching Against Sin: Homosexuality Ben Giselbach
- 1:00 am - 12:00 pm If Your Brother Sins Against You, Rebuke Him Luke 17:3..... Sam Willcutt
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Overcoming Negativity and Learning to be an Encourager Frank Shepard
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm The Hateful Rebuker – Rebuking with Love Without Compromise..... Neal Pollard
- Ladies — 2:00 pm “Setting My Husband Straight” – Dealing with a Husband with a Sin Problem Kathy Pollard
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Am I “Shepherd-able”? Submitting to the Authority of Elders..... Eric Owens

Thursday, July 30

- 9:00 am - 10:00 am When It’s My Toes: When the Rebuke Applies to Me Phillip Hines
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am Church Discipline: How to Do It Successfully – Proper Motivations, Methods for Winning Back Souls, etc... Timothy Wilkes, Sr.
- 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Rebuking: Is it Sinful to Call Names? Must I Go Privately to a Public False Teacher? Rick Popejoy
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Elders Must Have Backbone – Titus 1:9 Tony Lawrence
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath Steve Higginbotham
- Ladies — 2:00 pm How God Encourages His Children – “Comfort Scriptures” Bonnie Ruiz
- 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm A Case Study of Paul: Knowing the Difference Between Matters of Judgment and Doctrine (Acts 15 vs Galatians 2)..... Robert Taylor, Jr.

Ladies’ Classes will be held in the Fellowship Hall



Rick Popejoy Bonnie Ruiz Kevin Rutherford Frank Shepard Robert Taylor, Jr. Joe Wells Rob Whitacre Timothy Wilkes, Sr. Sam Willcutt