

“Evangelism”

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Have you ever loved someone or something so much that you couldn't stop telling people about it? Maybe it was when you first met your spouse, and you couldn't wait to tell others about him or her. Perhaps it was something as simple as a TV show or a movie or a book. We all tend to talk about the things we love the most. No one forces us to do it; talking about what we love comes naturally.

Have you ever told someone about a service or a product that you really enjoy? Maybe it was an appliance, or an electronic gadget. Maybe it was an exercise program or a diet. Whatever it was, when we find something that makes our life better, we tend to share it with others.

Have you ever heard news that was so good that you had to share it? Maybe it was something personal, like a promotion at work or even a new job. Perhaps you wanted be the first to tell people something in the news, perhaps that your favorite team acquired a highly-prized free agent. When we hear good news, particularly news that affects our lives, we want to share it with others.

Have you ever warned someone you love that they are doing something that is destructive? Maybe you have a family member who has been on drugs, or a family member who has been an alcoholic. Maybe you know someone who has a terrible diet or who smokes. Have you ever said to them, “If you keep doing this, you're going to die!”? When we love people, we want to warn them if they are headed towards a dangerous end.

We talk about what we love. We talk about things that make our life better. We talk about good news. And when we see people we love doing something harmful to them, even though it's uncomfortable, at some point we'll speak.

If you are a Christian, you have Someone whom you love more than anyone or anything else. If you are a Christian, you have something that has changed your life. In fact, you have something that will change your life forever and the only thing that will give you eternal hope and eternal life. If you are a Christian, you've heard the very best news that could ever be told. If you are a Christian and you love people who are not Christians, you know that they need to be warned about what will happen if they do not turn to Christ.

Today, I want to talk about telling people about Jesus, telling people about what he has done for us, telling people about the good news, and warning people about what will happen to them if they don't turn to Jesus. In other words, today I'm going to talk about evangelism.

I'll ask and answer three questions: What is evangelism? Who does evangelism? and, How do we do evangelism?

So, what is evangelism? Evangelism comes from the Greek verb εὐαγγελίζω, which means "to bring good news or announce good news." Evangelism means sharing the "evangel," or the gospel, which means "good news." So, evangelism is telling people good news.

What is this good news? For a start, we can look at a passage like 1 Corinthians 15:1–4:

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.¹

Paul says he preached the gospel to the Corinthians and this message has the power to save them. He says the matters of first importance regarding the gospel are these: Jesus Christ died for sins, was buried, and rose again. That's the core of the gospel message.

But if people aren't familiar with the gospel, those statements about Jesus are going to need explaining. For example, that says nothing about who Jesus is, what sin is, why Jesus had to die for sin, and what his resurrection means.

To get more context, we must read more of the Bible. Paul gives us more of an explanation of the gospel in the book of Romans. He tells us that though God is the creator of all things and is worthy of our praise, we ignore him. We don't honor him and give thanks to him. We exchange the truth that we were made to worship and honor and thank God for a lie, and we worship other things instead. And because of that, we deserve God's wrath (Rom. 1:18–25). He says that's true of all of us, even the most religious of us (see Rom. 2–3). But he also says that Jesus died for sinners. He was put forth as a "propitiation," as something that makes God favorable to us (Rom. 3:25). He says that Jesus "died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). The reason that statement is significant is that the ungodly, by turning away from God, deserve the "wages of sin," which is "death" (Rom. 6:23). Because we have not lived according to God's design, we

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

reap death. It's what we have earned. But Jesus steps in and takes that death for us, so that everyone who is united to him, who trusts that he is our only hope, can be forgiven and have the promise of eternal life. And that's something else that Paul talks about in Romans. He talks about looking forward to a future glory when this world will no longer experience the curse of sin and death, when there will no longer be pain and suffering (Rom. 8).

To summarize, the good news (or the gospel) is that though we were made for God and have turned away from God, God sent his Son to rescue us. God himself came for us, to live the life that we don't live and to die the death that we deserve, so that everyone who trusts in Jesus will be forgiven of all their sins and will be raised from the dead one day, just as he was almost two thousand years ago, in a body that cannot die. When Jesus returns, he will restore God's creation to be the way it should be. That's good news for everyone who has a right relationship with Jesus. But it's bad news for those who want nothing to do with him, or who want to follow him on their own terms. They will not experience a pain-free, death-free life in a newly created world. They will be cast out completely from God's presence. Therefore, they will never experience anything—even the smallest thing—that is good.

Here is a good definition of evangelism, which comes from the First International Congress on World Evangelism, held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is every kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.⁵

According to that definition, evangelism isn't just telling people the news about Jesus. It's also urging people to put their trust in him. And as we do so, we should indicate that when people follow Jesus, they must deny themselves. They must admit that they are no longer the king of

⁵ Quoted in D. J. Tidball, "Theology of Evangelism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 240-241. The entire Lausanne Covenant can be found at <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed January 8, 2012).

their lives, but Jesus is. And the truth is that, in this life, after one becomes a Christian, life may get harder. At least some people will hate you. Others will ridicule you. But it's worth it, because, in the end, following Jesus is our only hope to have eternal life with God. Following Jesus is the only way to have authentic life, to live according to the purpose of our existence.

Before I move on to the second question, I want to be clear about what evangelism is not. I should stress that evangelism isn't controlling the outcome. We can only deliver the good news. We cannot make people believe it.

Evangelism is not saying a few things about God. It's not saying, "I'll pray for you" when someone is having a problem. It's not saying, "God bless you," after someone sneezes. It's not saying, "Merry Christmas." Let's not kid ourselves. Such statements alone cannot save anyone.

Evangelism is also not proving that you are morally superior to others. Once I heard a husband and wife talk, separately, about their "witnessing." The husband first said that he was witnessing at the movie theater when he heard swearing behind him. He turned around and told the person swearing to watch his language. Two or three years later, his wife told me in a separate conversation, that her colleagues at work knew she was a Christian because she didn't use certain language. But that isn't evangelism. Mormons could do that. There are surely some atheists who don't swear and don't think it's right to use certain words. That "holier than thou" attitude tells someone nothing about God's grace. That tells someone nothing about the cross. In fact, it gives the impression that sin is only a matter of superficial things like words. But sin is much deeper than that. Our words are only a symptom; the disease is far more pervasive. Jesus said, "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34).²

Here's something else that isn't evangelism: Evangelism isn't telling your subjective experience of how you came to faith in Jesus. That can lead to evangelism. But it's not evangelism itself. Evangelism is telling people the objective good news of Jesus and how they can be part of that good news. If you tell people how you became a Christian, people can and will say things like, "Good for you," or, "Hey, whatever works for you." But if you state boldly that there is only one God, he made us for a particular purpose, that none of us live according to that purpose, that we therefore deserve condemnation, that Jesus is the only way to be rescued

² This is the translation found in the New International Version (1984). The ESV says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

from that condemnation and be restored to God, and that those who reject Jesus will go to hell, they won't and can't say, "Whatever floats your boat." They'll say, "How dare you claim there's only way to God?" Or they'll say, "You're so arrogant to make such an absolute statement," not realizing that the claim that you're arrogant is a pretty absolute statement in itself. Telling your story can lead to the good news, but it's not the good news itself.

So, hopefully that clarifies what evangelism is and isn't. Now, on to the second question: Who does evangelism? Or, to put it differently, whose responsibility is it to tell other people the gospel?

A lot of Christians assume that it's the pastor's job, or the missionary's job. Now, it's true that some of us will be more gifted at evangelism. Paul tells us Jesus gave the church, among other people, "the evangelists, the shepherds [or pastors] and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). Obviously, not everyone is a pastor, or a pastor-teacher. And that means not everyone is going to be an evangelist on that kind of level. If that were the only verse in the Bible that dealt with evangelism, we might think we're let off the hook.

But, of course, that's not the only verse. One of the most important verses about evangelism, in my opinion, is in 1 Peter, which is a book that I love but isn't as familiar to some Christians. When Peter talks about Christians, he says Christians are "like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). That means that we are part of God's temple. But we're not only the temple. We are also priests. And we are supposed to offer up sacrifices—not sacrifices for our sin, because the only sacrifice for sin is Jesus' death on the cross. But we're supposed to offer up our lives (Rom. 12:1), our good deeds (Heb. 13:16), and our praises (Heb. 13:15), to God.

Peter continues to tell us what priests do. He writes, in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." If you are a Christian, you were chosen by God to be his own prized possession. But, again, Peter calls us priests. This time he says we're royal priests. We're priests of the King. What is a priest? A priest is someone who mediates between God and humans. The Bible doesn't say that some Christian leaders are priests. The Bible says that *all* Christians are priests. We mediate God's blessings to others by telling them about God, serving them, and praying for them. Peter tells us

specifically that God made us his own so “that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Telling non-Christians about the “excellencies of God” sounds a lot like evangelism.

There’s another passage in the Bible that suggests that all Christians should have a role in telling others about Jesus. In 2 Corinthians, Paul spends quite a bit of time talking about and even defending his own ministry. And in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says that his ministry is a “ministry of reconciliation.” This is, in part, what he writes:

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:17–21).

It might be tempting to say that Paul is only talking about himself and his colleagues when he says that God “gave us the ministry of reconciliation” and that “we are ambassadors for Christ.” But look at how Paul uses “us” and “we.” He begins by saying that anyone in Christ, anyone united to Jesus, is a new creation. Then he says that God “through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” The “us” that Paul is talking about can’t be just Paul and Silas and Timothy and others he worked with. All Christians are new creations. All Christians are reconciled to God through Jesus. All Christians are also regarded as “the righteousness of God” because Jesus was “made . . . to be sin.”

(I want to point out that this passage says a lot about the gospel message. The gospel message could be summarized as “Christ for us.” Jesus died in our place on the cross. In verses 14 and 15, Paul writes,

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Jesus died for us. I don’t think Paul means Jesus died for every single human being because we know that not every human being will put their trust in Jesus. Not all human beings can be said to have “died” to their old way of living. So when Paul says “all have died” and “one has died

for all,” he must mean all Christians. The ones who are reconciled to God through Jesus’ death. If anyone wants to be reconciled to God, it is through Jesus. And it is on the basis of his death for, or in place of, his people. And those people will live no longer for themselves, but for Jesus. The love of Christ will control them.)

But the main point I want to make is that all Christians are ambassadors for Christ. All Christians should implore others to be reconciled to God. What is an ambassador? An ambassador is the authorized representative of a sovereign nation or state, sent to another nation or state. He or she is a citizen of the first country, sent to live in another one. For example, the American ambassador to China is a US citizen, authorized by the US government to represent America to the Chinese government. He is sent from his homeland to China, where he lives temporarily, and he is authorized to represent the US to the Chinese government. This will require that he knows all things American (law, foreign policy, political interests, customs) quite well. He will also have to understand the Chinese government, its policies and laws, and Chinese culture. His goal is to influence China for America. Of course, though he will be diplomatic and friendly toward the Chinese, he will always side with America whenever there is conflict, because he has sworn allegiance to his home country.

If we’re to be ambassadors of Jesus, we need to know that we’re primarily citizens of the kingdom of God. We need to know all things about this kingdom, which means we’ll need to know the King and his word, the Bible. And we need to represent the King to others around us, who are not yet citizens of this kingdom. Since we’re ambassadors, we have no right to change or edit the message of the King. Our message is that others need to be reconciled to the King. That means they need to leave the kingdom they are in and transfer their allegiance to the true King.

And now we’re already getting to the third question, which is: How do we do evangelism? A lot of people have assumed that we do evangelism in a certain way. They’ve been taught to tell their story, or to present people with a few “spiritual laws,” culminating in asking the person to repeat the “sinner’s prayer.” I’ve already said that telling someone your story isn’t same as telling them the gospel. That can lead up to the gospel, but it’s not the same thing.

Here’s why I have a problem with something like the four spiritual laws or taking a few verses out of context from the book of Romans. Such presentations usually don’t give people enough information. They give people a few verses or a few thoughts and then ask for a

commitment. That's a significant problem. People get more information about a smart phone they'll use for two years, or a house they'll have a 30-year mortgage on. We're talking about eternal life and death. We need to give people more information so they can make an informed choice to trust in Jesus. We need to be able to explain more of the whole story of the Bible to people. That's essentially what Paul did when he was in Athens, which we read about in Acts 17. He needed to first tell them about who God is.

Rico Tice, who has written an excellent and short book on evangelism called *Honest Evangelism*, says we need to be able to invest more time in sharing the gospel. He writes, "witnessing takes time and effort. The days when you could go from zero to the gospel in a single conversation are not the norm."³ He says that because today people don't know the Bible. So you can't assume they know concepts like "God" and "sin." He says, "Research suggests that when people put their faith in Christ, on average it's taken two years from the point when they came into meaningful contact with a Christian who witnessed to them—and that period is growing."⁴ Giving people short tracts or canned presentations doesn't generally work.

Another problem is our methods of gospel presentations often use the wrong bait, such as "do you want to go to heaven when you die?" Now, let me suggest that almost everyone, if they believe in any concept of heaven, will say yes. But that's not our problem. Our problem is we don't want God. Sometimes I've heard Christians talk about heaven as one big family reunion. They say things like, "Oh, then I'll get to see my mother and father, and uncle Joe, and grandma, too. And we'll sit and talk about all the good times." And I want to ask, "Will God be in that heaven?" The whole point of Christianity is that we can be reconciled to God. We can be his prized possession. As one pastor has put it, "God is the gospel."⁵ But our problem is that we don't see God as our greatest treasure. We need to point that problem out to other people.

Some supposed gospel presentations begin with, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." I find that problematic. I think God loves everyone and I think all of God's plans are wonderful. But God doesn't love everyone in the same way. I think he loves those who are united to Christ the way he loves Christ. The Bible doesn't say God loves everyone in that way. In fact, Psalm 5:5 says God hates "all evildoers" and Psalm 11:5 says that God "hates the

³ Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism: How to Talk about Jesus Even When It's Tough* (The Good Book Company, 2015), 87–88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵ John Piper, *God Is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

wicked.” The apostles never begin with “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” No. Instead, they often point out a person’s problem. Ultimately, that’s sin, but throughout the Bible, the root of sin is often idolatry: the worship of something other than the true God. Our problem isn’t simply one of ignorance or immorality. Our problem is a relational one. We don’t relate to God rightly because we don’t acknowledge him as supreme and we love him and worship him.

The problem with telling people that if they would only pray some form of the “sinner’s prayer,” they would be reconciled to God, is that people then think it’s only a matter of saying the right words. Anyone can say words. Anyone can get baptized. That doesn’t mean their heart has been changed. That doesn’t mean they have become a new creation. We can seriously mislead people into thinking that if they only say the right password, they’ll get into heaven. We need to be clear that that’s not how it works. Again, the apostles never, ever tell people to say a “sinner’s prayer.” The only person who would say some form of a sinner’s prayer is already a Christian. The sinner in Jesus’ parable in Luke 18:9–14 wasn’t told to say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” in order to be saved. He said it because he meant it, and it was that attitude that showed he had already received God’s grace. We need to tell people the gospel and tell them to repent of their sin and turn to faith in Jesus. If a person repents and puts their trust in Jesus, we’ll see a change. We’ll then start reading the Bible and praying and coming to church and desiring to be baptized. We don’t have to tell them to say a set of words.

So, if we’re not supposed to only tell people our story or give them an overly simplified and misleading presentation, what are we supposed to do?

First, we need to know the content of the real gospel. In the past, I’ve suggested thinking about it in terms of four words: God, man (or human beings), Jesus, response.⁶ That’s a good way of framing the whole story of the Bible in quick way. God is the perfect triune community of love who created a good world for his purposes, so that he would be known and celebrated. He created human beings to relate to him in a unique way: They were supposed to worship him, accurately reflect who he is in the world, rule over the world by coming under his commands, and love him like obedient children. But then we find the problem: From the beginning, human beings haven’t done that. We haven’t trusted that God is good. We haven’t listened to his word.

⁶ I certainly didn’t invent this outline. I’ve seen this framework used many times. One explanation of the gospel using this framework is Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

And when we turn away from the Giver of life, we find death. God gave us a partial punishment for our rejection of him by giving us hard lives and a physical death. But God doesn't leave the story there. And that's good news. God sends his Son to become a man. Of course, that's Jesus. Jesus is the one who fulfills the role that humans always should have played. He always worships and honors the Father, representing him perfectly. Though he is the only perfect human who has ever lived, he died in the place of everyone who comes to him in faith, who trusts that he is their only hope. His death satisfied the penalty for their sin. His resurrection shows that he paid that debt in full, that he did the time for his people's crimes and walked out a free man. His resurrection shows that God will one day recreate the world to be perfect. There will be no more diseases, wars, natural disasters, or deaths. Until then, God gives the Holy Spirit to recreate people from the inside out. The only way to be forgiven, to be adopted into God's family, and to have eternal life is to turn from our old way of living as if we are King and to turn to the true King. Everyone else will stand condemned and will eventually be removed from God's presence and any scrap of goodness.

That's one way of laying out the whole gospel. And even that is simplifying a lot of it. Rico Tice, that evangelist with the funny name, suggests thinking of three words: Identity, mission, and call. Identity refers to Jesus' identity. We need to tell people who he is. Mission refers to why he came: To bring us to God through his perfect life and his sacrificial death. The call is the call to deny ourselves and be willing to put our old lives to death.⁷

All of us can learn these basic outlines. You should be able to fill in the details based on your knowledge of the Bible. If you don't know the Bible well enough, chances are you are not going to be a great evangelist.

But here's the thing: You don't need to have the greatest Bible knowledge to be an evangelist. You certainly don't need to know how to answer every question people have. Now, if you know the Bible well and know how to answer objections and questions, we're going to be better evangelists. There's no excuse for not growing in these areas. But we don't have to wait until we're perfect in our knowledge to tell people about Jesus.

Rico Tice suggests four models for evangelism.⁸ He says that there are some people who are like the apostle Peter, people who are bold and confrontational. Others are more like Paul,

⁷ Tice, *Honest Evangelism*, 63–72.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 73–84.

thoughtful and reasoned. I'm guessing that most of us won't fall into either category. But there is hope for the rest of us. Some are like the man who was born blind and was healed by Jesus. This is what we read about in John 9. After the man is healed, he is questioned by the Pharisees, a sect of Jewish religious leaders. He couldn't answer all their questions, but he said this: "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). Even if we don't know the content of the gospel well, we can tell people how Jesus has changed us and then tell them where they can learn more about Jesus. This may be properly regarded as "pre-evangelism." We find something similar in John 4, when Jesus presents himself to a sinful woman at a well. The woman leaves Jesus and tells other people in her village, "Come, see" Jesus. If you don't know how to explain everything about Jesus or answer all their questions, you can at least say, "Come, read about Jesus in the Bible with me." Or you can say, "Come, see someone who can explain this better than I can." Or you can say, "Why don't you come to church with me?" And then go with that person so they feel more comfortable coming here.

We're running out of time this morning, but I want to say this also: Our gospel-telling must be appropriate for each person. Jesus never talked the same way to each person. And we need to be sensitive to where each person is coming from. We need to ask what the other person believes. We can do that in easygoing, low-confrontational sorts of ways by asking them what they think about God, or if they have ever read the Bible, or what they think the purpose of life is. Those questions can be asked in a calm, low-key way, but they can open up long conversations. Paul tells us, in the context of sharing the gospel, to "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (Col. 4:6). We need to speak graciously, and we need to speak with the right kind of salt, which can mean seasoning but can also mean a preservative. We need to season our speech so that we speak the preserving truth of the gospel to people. And we need to season our speech that we can answer each person's questions and present the gospel to each person. That means we need to know our audience and know the gospel well enough to approach it from the right angle.

Jonathan Dodson, in his book on evangelism called, *The Unbelievable Gospel*, says we should be able to use the different gospel metaphors found in the Bible to speak to different people.⁹ Some people might think more about their guilt and being punished for sin. In such a

⁹ Jonathan K. Dodson, *The Unbelievable Gospel: Say Something Worth Believing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 129-130.

case, the legal language of justification might be appropriate. For others, perhaps those who feel enslaved to sin, addiction, and idolatry, the metaphor of redemption might work better. Some who feel like outcasts, who feel lonely and rejected, might want to hear about the metaphor of adoption into God's family. Others might want to hear about being made a new creation. And others might want to hear about how they can be united to Christ and become part of his body and part of his bride. This is another highly relational view of the gospel. For each metaphor, you can probably think of different stories in the Bible that illustrate what the gospel is.

Now, before I finish, I actually want to sneak in a fourth question: Why don't we evangelize? I realize that most of us aren't actively sharing our faith. Why is that so? I think it's because of three reasons. One, we don't know what we're doing. We're not equipped. Two, we have idols that we cherish more than the salvation of souls and the glory of God. We're afraid of losing relationships and losing people's acceptance of us. Three, perhaps we really don't believe that apart from Christ, people will have eternal condemnation and not eternal life.

If you don't talk about Jesus because you're not equipped, I say this to you: My sermons are intended to equip you. Don't just listen for yourself. Listen so you can repeat some of what I say to others. Also, we have books in the library that can help you. I recommended a number of books recently, some of which are about evangelism or answering people's questions. Do you know how many of those books were checked out from our library? Zero! That tells me a lot.

If you don't talk about Jesus because you're afraid it might get messy or you might get rejected, please know in advance that you will get rejected some times. People will hate you. But not everyone. Rico Tice says we need to be willing to cross the "painline."¹⁰ We need to think about the realities of heaven and hell. We need to think about how great God is and how wonderful his promises are. If our fears are greater than our love for God and our love for others, then something is wrong.

If you're here today and you feel like you've always been a failure at evangelism, know that you're not saved by how great an evangelist you've been. You are saved by the grace of God. Salvation is a gift, one that's not based on what you have done but based entirely on what Jesus has done. If you feel like you have failed, ask God for forgiveness. Confess your sin of keeping your mouth shut when you should have been telling others about good news. Ask God

¹⁰ Tice, *Honest Evangelism*. He uses this term throughout the book.

for the grace to help you become equipped. Ask God to help you learn, to give you opportunities to speak, and to become bolder in your speech. Ask God to help you love others more.

And then get to work. If you want to learn, I'm happy to tell you how you can grow in this area. At the least, take a few flyers and invite people to "come and see" during the month of December. Take a few of those tracts on the back table, read one carefully for your own sake, and then ask someone to read it with you. Keep praying, keep learning, and keep looking for opportunities. God will bless you and the church as you do these things.