

Everyday Evangelism

What about Evangelism, If You Are Not an Evangelist?

By Daran Armstrong

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence (1 Peter 3:14-15).

How many Christian believers are engaging with lost people about Jesus and what He did for all of us on the cross? I am not referring to full-time evangelists, Christian apologists, pastors, or missionaries. I am talking about those of us who are regulars in the local church and surround ourselves with other believers who think like we do. True, spiritual gifts are given to individual believers, who make up the church body. Praise God for evangelists like Billy Graham, who at a 1973 crusade in South Korea, once preached the gospel to over one million people in a single day and saw close to 75,000 of them come forward to receive Jesus as their God and Savior. Scripture affirms this diversity of spiritual gifts in the church body.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

However, in 1 Peter 3:14-15, Peter is not talking about specially-gifted believers. My question is, are Christian factory workers, teachers, students, plumbers, electricians, office workers, etc., called to talk to the lost about Jesus? The short answer is, yes! But how do we do that? How do we defend the Truth and talk to lost people about the gift of grace offered to us through the sacrifice of what Jesus did on the cross, if we do not have the gift of evangelism? Before we answer those questions, we need to define the mission as reaching the lost. The objective is reaching those who have not put their faith in Jesus Christ. The following six points can help us *make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.*

1. Although Christian Believers Are Not to be of the World, They Are to be in the World

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you (John 15:18-19).

Being surrounded by the lost can be intimidating, but we must put ourselves out there, even when it is not the most comfortable thing to do. Non-Christians are mocking, bashing, and despising believers everywhere, all the time. Take, for instance, Chicago Bulls' basketball player Jaden Ivey. Recently, Jaden questioned the NBA's stance on the LGBTQ community, and he was released from his contract for actions detrimental to the team. He is facing severe criticism, hate from everywhere on social media, and will probably never play in the NBA again. Because of situations like Jaden Ivey's, many Christians do not put themselves out there. We tend to stay in our comfortable circles with other believers, who think like we do, and keep our faith to ourselves. Maybe we attend a local church, participate in a weekly Bible study, maybe we home school our kids, and think that is enough. However, we tend to keep quiet about Truth because we do not want to be called intolerant homophobes, transphobes, misogynists, supremacists, or whatever else the world wants to call those of us who follow the Bible.

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To be clear, once we receive Jesus as our God and Savior, we are not of this world. This is Satan's realm, and the devil's domain. The lost are followers of Satan, even though they seldom realize it. To

help persuade non-Christians to escape condemnation and follow Jesus, what is the next step after putting ourselves out there?

2. Be Ready to Make a Defense

How do we prepare ourselves to make a defense for Truth (*the hope that is in you*)? You cannot defend something, if you do not know anything about what you are defending. How do you get ready to make a defense for *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*? – **JESUS!** (John 14:6). First, it takes time and effort. For example, before the Apostle Paul’s conversion, he was a Pharisee, and he knew the Old Testament (OT) well. After his conversion, he studied the OT for about 13 years, preparing his defense that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. While we may not need Paul’s level of preparation, we do need to improve our knowledge of Scripture. Following are four suggestions that will help us prepare:

- Read God’s special revelation (the Bible), rather than going to more Christian meetings.
- Study the Bible with someone who knows the Bible better than you do, rather than just go to another small fellowship group.
- Disciple someone else, ...*entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Timothy 2:2), rather than listen to another speaker.
- Get your answers from the Bible, rather than from politics or social media.

Growing in biblical knowledge is a lifelong process—but it does not take years to begin meaningful conversations about Jesus—So, what is next?

3. Demonstrate the External Evidence of the Hope that Is Within Us

We do not need to knock on the doors of strangers’ homes and tell them about Jesus. We do not need to preach the Truth to passersby from a street corner or pass out tracts. But, now that we have made Jesus our God and Savior and are ready to defend the Truth, there needs to be external evidence for the hope that is within us. What does that look like? No one will ask about our hope if we are aloof, grumpy, negative, or critical. Showing the lost our internal hope with our attitude and actions is a good way for them to see our hope and maybe lead to a few opportunities to share it!

- Be positive, joyful, and thankful. If you are thankful in all things, lost people will see a difference, they will see a light in you. *Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
- Exemplify the fruits of the Spirit. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law* (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Jesus gave us a powerful way to show the lost our internal hope: ... *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’* (Matthew 22:39). This is the precursor to the “Golden Rule.”
- Help others out when they need it. Help someone change a flat tire. After a heavy snow, shovel an elderly neighbor’s sidewalk. Take dinner to someone you know who is struggling with health issues: *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?* (James 2:20).
- Read your Bible in public places. Take your Bible to work and read it at lunch. When traveling, read your Bible at the airport or on the plane. It has been my experience that, occasionally, people will ask what you are reading, or why you are reading the Bible. They may even say something like, “The Bible is just a bunch of myths, why would you read it?” The burden of proof, for a question like that, is on the one who made the assertion. Instead of defending your position right away, start with a question like, “Where did you hear the Bible is full of myths?” Remember, responding to assertions with questions is a good way to get people to engage and may lead to some interesting conversations.

4. Engage the Lost when They Have Difficult Circumstances—Be Aware of the Signals

What if we are never asked about the hope that is within us? Does this mean we get a free pass and do not need to talk to others about Jesus? I do not think so! We all experience difficult circumstances. Health issues, relationship failures, and financial problems are just a few of life's situations that are difficult to handle. Following is an example of a tough situation where lost people might be open to discussions about purpose and destiny. Everybody experiences the loss of a loved one, friend, or co-worker. These are times when hearts are open to questions and consolation. *It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart* (Ecclesiastes 7:2). Conversations about those losses, that we all experience, are opportunities to talk with others about our hope as followers of Jesus Christ. Asking questions like: "Where do you think Bob is now?" or "What do you think happens to people after they pass?" are great ways to get conversations about purpose and destiny started. Most of the answers will end up with some variation of "good people go to heaven." This is a signal or clue that should not be passed up. When responding, we do not want to be combative or argumentative, like I have been too many times. I have blown this opportunity by arguing that there are no good people, and we all deserve a fiery hell. Although my statement is correct, it will not do any good. We need to start by finding the source of the lost individual's beliefs. Start with questions like: "How did you come to believe that good people go to heaven?" or "Would you like to know what the Bible says about that?" Then be patient and actually listen to their answer. There is a chance that they will be interested in what you have to say.

5. Share Your Hope while Defending Biblical Values

Everybody has an opinion on morality, and most are willing to talk about it. While defending biblical values, there will be opportunities to talk about the hope that is in us. This century has been upside down with reference to morality. Before the 21st century, biblical values were seen as a positive. In contrast, what we have observed, since the early 2000's, is that biblical values are seen as a total negative. Abortion, unwed couples living together, and LGBTQ issues, are topics everyone will have an opinion about, and some will be willing to discuss that opinion. The following example is a trend that will end up affecting most, if not all, of us. According to the Bible, marriage is between a man and a woman. This used to be viewed positively, but if this is your current view on marriage—you are now called "intolerant". Many people I know have already been invited to a gay/trans wedding. If you just RSVP that you will not attend, you have missed an opportunity. How about this response. "I will not be able to attend, but can we grab a cup of coffee together, sometime soon, so I can tell you why in person?" Most likely your request will be rejected, but the door is now open. At a minimum, you will have conversations with other friends or coworkers that have been invited to the same wedding. Do not miss out on the signals you will get from them.

6. Deliver the Message of Hope with Gentleness and Respect

When responding to questions or assertions about Scripture, do not be impatient, trying to prove your point and win the argument. As I pointed out earlier, being combative or argumentative is not the way to defend the Truth. All that will generate is stubbornness or maybe a comment like, "Christians are so judgmental." At that point, you have most likely blown that opportunity. At best, you are fighting an uphill battle. Responding with questions, like the examples above, is a much better way to find out why people believe the way they do.

Conclusion

Talking to lost people about Jesus is not reserved for a select gifted few. It is every believer's responsibility. It does not require a stage or a microphone. Remember, you do not have to go looking for opportunities to share the hope that is in you. Those opportunities are all around you. It requires a willingness, awareness, preparation, and a heart that reflects the hope of Jesus Christ.

Be out there...Be ready...Be aware...Ask questions...Do not be argumentative