

Evangelism Simplified

By Bob Young

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I recently preached a sermon entitled “The Good News of Re-Creation.” The sermon was part of a short series focused on God’s work and purpose in the world. Topics in the series included God’s Revelation, the Good News of Re-Creation, Rebirth and Renewal through the Spirit, Reconciliation that Brings Real Newness, and Authentic Discipleship--Resolved.

I seldom use personal illustrations in sermons, but this particular sermon was filled with personal examples of people Jan and I have known, those who have experienced God’s good news and become part of the new creation of God. We were amazed and encouraged by the response to the evangelistic stories of our lives and ministries. One person described it as “our life in less than 30 minutes.” God blessed us marvelously with 20 years of local church ministry in two evangelistic, rapidly growing churches. Later, we spent about a dozen years in Christian higher education with a focus on training ministers, and along the way became very involved in mission work. Always our ministry has been about saving souls. God blessed us in our early ministry with an understanding of the power of the gospel, and we have been part of hundreds of baptisms— teaching, preaching, encouraging, and asking people to accept salvation in Christ.

In recent years, the church has made evangelism hard and unnatural. Sharing good news should be one of the easiest, most natural things in the world. We have made it artificial and difficult. We have developed programs that seek “converts” and depend more on human wisdom and power than on God’s wisdom and power. While we quote Bible passages that speak of God’s power (in his Word, grace, the gospel, and preaching), we have failed to see God’s power in the obvious places.

We have become so program-oriented that we have failed to focus on the fact that the gospel communicates God’s love to people. The gospel travels across bridges from person to person. We are called to be people of peace, to find other people of peace, and to use the natural bridges of relationships to spread the good news of Jesus.

The power of God is in unlikely and unseen places—the power of the ordinary, the power of relationships, the power of encouragement, the power of caring, the power of a vision and a goal, and the power of asking, and the power of our words and examples. In these simple rhythms of our lives, the power of the gospel is available to us. God sends us forth according to his plan and purpose in the ordinary days of our lives, through the relationships and people in our lives, with opportunities to encourage and care, with boldness to ask.

Perhaps we are less than effective because we have focused on “doing” rather than “asking”. Jesus promised, “Ask and ye shall receive.” If evangelism is by God’s power, it should be a constant subject of our prayers.