

Paul the Evangelist

Romans 10

INTRODUCTION: In his book, “The Power of Habit,” Charles Duhigg writes that scientists are just beginning to discover the immense power of certain KEYSTONE habits. keystones are habits or actions that have a disproportionate influence on other decisions in your life.

- **Health** - People who really work out intently tend to make good eating choices, sleep better, have less stress and anxiety, and develop a stronger immune system, so they are more resistant to disease. Why? Because working out creates a chain of events. The other decisions come almost automatically when you get the Keystone correct.
- **Marriage** - Couples who regularly go on date nights tend to fight less, enjoy better intimacy, enjoy their marriage more, and divorce less. Why? Because dating your spouse is a keystone habit.

So you don’t have to MASTER dozens of disciplines - you really only need to understand and engage in a few healthy keystone habits, and it will create a cycle that will greatly improve your overall life.

NOW - what about Spirituality? Are there keystone habits that will cause the various disciplines to fall into place? What is one thing we can do that will cause us to love God and people more, pray more, serve more, give more, and have a greater impact for the Kingdom?

The one habit, from my experience and observation, that influences all the other disciplines the most is the habit of evangelism - that is, seeking to influence others with the Gospel.

Chances are, if we were conducting a survey of any given church in our bible belt culture, evangelism would probably rank as the weakest and least practiced of all spiritual disciplines.

But think about it. If you are actively engaged in winning other people to Christ from your circle of influence:

- You will sin less - because you don’t want to hinder your witness.
- You will pray more - because you are desperately needing God’s power.
- You will serve your church better- because you will look at your church totally different when you see it through the eyes of outsiders.

If there was ONE THING that I could ask God for that I knew he would give us, it would be that every member of this church would be actively engaged in reaching outsiders. It would be a revolution at our two campuses.

CONTEXT: The last time we were together, we saw Paul’s deep concern for his kinsmen, the Jews. He went as far as to say that he would be willing to be cut off from Christ that they might be converted. This week we hear his Pastoral heart as he shares some of the practical ways he seeks their conversion.

ILLUSTRATION: Before I moved to Florida, I was a Bass Fisherman in the purest sense of the word.

- I had a 21ft bass boat engineered to put you on the bass, from the 250 Mercury motor to the latest sonar fish finder.
- I studied the patterns and habits of the Bass.
- I learned the bait that those fish responded to best
- I studied which parts of a lake they were in at certain times of the day, month, and year.
- I learned that the PH level of the water affected the Bass's habits.
- I learned that weather affected these fish

Then I used all of this information to make me the worst nightmare of a large-mouth bass. Well, Jesus compared Evangelism to becoming a FISHER of MEN. In the text before us, Paul equips us to catch the hearts of people for Christ.

1. Effective Evangelism Prioritizes Prayer -

TEXT: Romans 10:1–4 (ESV)

¹ Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

2. Effective Evangelism Prohibits Performance -

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

3. Effective Evangelism Pursues the Heart -

⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

WE MUST EARN THE RIGHT TO SPEAK TO THE INMOST PERSON:

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (ESV)

¹⁹ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Tim Keller said it well: *“A person will be about as good at Evangelism as they are at friendship.”*

4. Effective Evangelism Proclaims the Gospel -

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Be Familiar with Evangelistic Triggers:

- 1. Theological Ignorance** - Most of the witnessing opportunities we see in the New Testament began with a Christian biblically correcting someone's theological misunderstanding.
- 2. A Family Crisis** - Someone going through marriage difficulty, rebellious children. Those things should serve as triggers to you... Oh, perhaps I should invite this person to church. Perhaps I should share my faith.
- 3. A Life Transition** - This may be a divorce, or it may be a marriage; it could be the first child, the death of a loved one. It could be graduating high school or college. It could be someone just moving to the area.

Here is the principle: *The more disruptive a life event is to a person's psychological equilibrium, the more it will cause him/her to be spiritually receptive.*

Robert Pierson rightly observes:

People most often make decisions for Christ when they are going through transitions. Most do not tend to make decisions about new commitments and directions in their life when everything is going well. We make those decisions when we are in the midst of stress and difficulty.

4. Effective Evangelism Practices Patience -

18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” 19 But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” 20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” 21 But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: Here is a painting by Vincent Van Gogh called, “The Book.” It would sell today for between \$45 and \$65 million dollars.

Many do know that the great Dutch Painter, Vincent Van Gogh, was the son of a godly pastor, and Van Gogh himself wanted to preach the Gospel. For a while he lived in London, and his favorite preacher was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Each Lord’s Day, Van Gogh sat among the crowds of as many as 10 - 20 thousand people listening to Spurgeon preach the Gospel. In the evenings Van Gogh would go down to the East End of London and work as a street preacher.



He wanted to study the Scriptures more deeply, so he went to the university at Antwerp. Sadly, he fell into a school that was very liberal in its views of scripture, and day by day, they raised questions over the authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy of the biblical text - and ultimately Van Gogh lost his confidence in God and turned to immorality.

You’d expect a great artist to paint something that reflected this change in position, and he did. He calls it “An open bible with a candlestick and a book.”

- The bible had belonged to his father, a Dutch Reformed Pastor in the Netherlands...it is opened to Isa. 53.
- The candlestick is no longer burning...
- The book is an erotic pornographic novel that had been banned called, “The Girl Elisa” by Emile Zola.

INVITATION: Everyday life events, circumstances, and curiosities bring men, women, and young adults into situations where they sit before an open Bible, wondering if there are any answers.

The question is - is there a candle to illuminate their understanding?

If not, like Van Gogh, one by one, they were turned to the sensual desires of the world until they woke up one day, and it's too late.

I am asking God to light a few hundred candles today.