

HAVING 20/20 VISION (Envisioning for Evangelism) SCRABO - 8.9.19.

Acts 20:20 "I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes."

Acts 20:21 "I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus."

The Gospel calls for repentance and faith in Jesus but Paul highlighted how, for him and those who were already following Jesus, that meant teaching this message everywhere they went - literally from house to house. In our current climate we need to be intentional in sharing with people "house to house" – people in our sphere of influence, in our communities – our neighbours, family, colleagues etc.

Acts 17:24-28 – notice two things from this passage:-

1. v.26 – "he (God) marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." Or "the boundaries of their dwelling place" (ESV). In other words, God has put people where they are and has determined the time for their being there!
2. Why has God put them there? – v.27 – "God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him"

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 – Three helpful premises for evangelism:-

1. People have been blinded by the god of this age – so they cannot see the light of the Gospel (v.4). See also 1 Cor. 2:14.
2. We preach Christ! (v.5a)
3. God opens blind eyes – in the same way as He called light into creation (v.6) – Genesis 1:3

So we are to preach Christ, which will involve also teaching the truth of God's wrath against sin and the need for repentance – Acts 20:21 – "the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus." Combined with that we will pray that God will open blinded eyes; call light into darkness.

When we bring the message of the gospel to people, there will be both hunger and hostility! Rico Tice in "Honest Evangelism" suggests three things that will be helpful in approaching folks:-

1. CELEBRATE people! Even fallen people were made in God's image and have still something of that imprint – "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27). So take an interest in them – ask questions of them – e.g. "What is your biggest pressure?"
2. DO of random acts of kindness.
3. TELL – cross the pain line - we might struggle with this but statistics indicate that 70% of people have Christian friends who impress and 20% of that 70% would like to know more! That means of the 20 non-Christian friends that you might have, 14 will be favourably impressed by your faith and 3 or 4 of them might like to know more!

Practical Tips:-

- Choose 2 People - Ask God to put two people on your heart to reach with the Gospel (family, friend, neighbour, colleague).
- Pray - Commit to pray for these two people to come to know Jesus.
- Invest - Go out of your way to invest in your friendship with the people you're praying for. Show kindness, offer encouragement, spend time with them in person or on the phone. Find ways you can meet needs that person or their family may have.
- Share - Be ready to "seize the moment" & share the Gospel with the people you're praying for.
- Invite - Invite these two people, along with their families, to special events at church and/or regular Sunday services.
- Get trained up and avail of evangelistic tools that might help.
- Be a "Bible-Sharer" – not as difficult as you might think. Offer to read the Bible with a non-Christian friend/contact.

E.g., Take Psalm 103:13-18 –

"13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

15 The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field;

16 the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

17 But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts."

3 Questions:-

1. What does it say about God?
2. What does it say about humanity (us)?
3. So what?

We live in a generation and culture in which it is no longer a given that people have had even a rudimentary exposure to the Gospel. Thus, we often need to engage in what could be considered "pre-evangelism"; that is "gateway" events and contact with people that will hopefully lead to further opportunities down the line when such people will have clear opportunity to be presented with the claims of the Gospel. Evangelism should therefore be seen as a process rather than an event. Nevertheless we must seek to tell/proclaim the good news when it is appropriate and in a fitting manner. We must seek to build bridges and relationships, often through activities, but we must also ensure that we have occasions where we have proclamation or distinct Gospel sharing opportunities. All Christians are to be witnesses of their risen Lord and can to be involved in sharing the good news – it is a personal commission for all Christians.

"... when the Bible speaks about people outside of Christ being 'without God and without hope in the world' it really does mean that they are bereft of any hope whatsoever ... we (often) lose focus and become distracted ... we lose the urgency of the Gospel appeal. The Gospel can then degenerate into a fine notion, an apologetic argument, a philosophical idea or a comforting story, anything but an urgent appeal to men and women to turn from hell and turn to God. Yet the Bible's teaching on the issue is clear and unequivocal: the lost are truly lost, and the Gospel is the only means of finding and rescuing them." Stephen Timmis in "How Lost are the Lost?"