

A Theology of Evangelism

Introduction: God Centered Motivation For Evangelism

John Wesley's Objection to the Doctrine of Election in Relation to Evangelism:

If this be so (i.e. if there be an election) then is all preaching vain: it is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching to save souls is void, with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected; for they cannot possibly be saved; they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void, with regard to them likewise. So that in either case our preaching is in vain."

George Whitefield's response:

O dear Sir, what kind of reasoning, or rather sophistry is this! Hath not God, who hath appointed salvation for a certain number appointed also the preaching of the word, as a means to bring them to it? Does any one hold election in any other sense? And if so, how is preaching needless to them that are elected; when the gospel is designed by God himself, to be the power of God unto their eternal salvation? And since we know not who are elect, and who reprobate, we are to preach promiscuously to all. For the word may be useful, even to the non-elect, in restraining them from much wickedness and sin. However, it is enough to excite to the utmost diligence in preaching and hearing, when we consider that by these means, some, even as many as the Lord that ordained to eternal life, shall certainly be quickened and enabled to believe. And who, that attends, especially with reverence and care, can tell but he may be found of that happy number? ... it is the doctrine of election that mostly presses me to abound in good works. I am made willing to suffer all things for the elect's sake. This makes me to preach with comfort, because I know salvation does not depend on man's free will, but the Lord makes willing in the day of his power and can make use of me to bring some of his elect home, when and where he pleases.

What was Whitfield's source for motivation in Evangelism and what Biblical references support them?

1. Whitfield was motivated by his trust in God's power working in the gospel to save.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

2. Whitfield was motivated by his love not for the "lost" generally, but for the lost of God's sheep, those who are the elect but do not enjoy the privileges.

2Tim. 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Notice also:

Matt. 24:22 *And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

Titus 1:1 *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness,*

Luke 15:11ff It was love for a lost "son" that Christ says ought to motivate the Pharisees to preach the gospel:

3. Whitfield's confidence in the efficacious power of the Holy Spirit to effectually call those God has prepared for salvation.

Eph. 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and ... **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...**8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

1Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

1Cor. 1:20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. **22** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1Cor.2:9

But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. **11** For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God.

II. Reason seeking Faith? Or Faith Seeking Reason?

A. Our Theological Guideposts relative to Conversion:

WCF X: Effectual Calling

- I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.
- II. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

WCF XIV: Saving Faith

- I. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts...
- II. ...the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.
- III. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

WCF XV: Repentance Unto Life

- I. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.
- II. By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavouring (e.g. try.attempt) to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.
- III. Although repentance is not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ, yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.

WCF XVIII: Assurance of Grace and Salvation

- I. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption

B. Contrast of Reason Seeking Faith vs. Faith Seeking Reason Illustrated: (2 Examples)

Example #1: Belief in God

A. Reason Seeking Faith:

Predicated upon the Enlightenment assumption that all truth must have a rationale foundation, some will then say that we cannot believe until we have proven our faith by our reason. Faith is suspended upon human reason.

Two Illustrations:

1. Descarte:

- a. I have an idea of God in my mind.
- b. The idea of God is infinite and perfect
- c. An infinite and perfect idea could only come from an infinite and perfect being.
- d. God must exist in order to be the origin of the idea of God

The only alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me. And one certainly ought not to find it strange that God, in creating me, placed this idea within me to be like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work; and it is likewise not essential that the mark shall be something different from the work itself.

Descartes, *Meditations: IVs*

2. Locke:

Though God has given us no innate ideas of himself; though he has stamped no original characters on our minds wherein we may read his being; yet having furnished us with those faculties our minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without witness; since we have sense, perception, and reason and cannot want a clear proof of him, as long as we carry ourselves about us. *Nor can we justly complain of our ignorance in this great point; since he has so plentifully provided us with the means to discover and know him.*

John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 10.1

"Teleological Argument" (Argument from Design)

1. All design implies a Designer
2. Great design implies a great designer
3. There is great design in the world.
4. Therefore there must be a great Designer of the world.

Problem: At best, this leads to idolatry—an "unmoved mover" sort of God who has no Lordship, no salvation, no personhood, etc. Thus, the insufficiency of a "general knowledge" of God toward a *true* knowledge of God and salvation:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God make it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being

understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Romans 1:18-21, (also 3:10-18)

Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand... as the Prophet Isaiah has said, "You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

Matthew 13:13

Although the Lord represents both himself and his everlasting Kingdom in the mirror of his words with very great clarity, such is our stupidity that we grow increasingly dull toward so manifest testimonies, and they flow away without profiting us. V.11

We ought not to rack our brains about God: but rather we should contemplate Him in His works... no long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty... we are called to a knowledge of God; not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart. V.1.9

John Calvin *Institutes*

There are another sort of people that lack proofs, not because they are out of their reach, but because they will not use them; who, though they have riches and leisure enough, and lack neither parts nor other helps, are yet never the better for them. Their hot pursuit of pleasure, or constant drudgery in business, engages some men's thoughts elsewhere; laziness and oscitancy in general, or a particular aversion for books, study, and meditation, keep other from any serious thought at all. And some out of fear that an impartial inquiry would not favor those opinions which best suit their prejudices, lives, and designs, content themselves, without examination, to take upon trust what they find convenient and in fashion... He that would seriously set upon the search of truth, ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love of it. For he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it; nor be much concerned when he misses it... And one may truly say, that there are very few lovers of truth, for truth's sake, even amongst those who persuade themselves that they are so.

John Locke *Essay*, Book IV, Chap.XX.6

B. Faith Seeking Reason:

By faith, even the free gift of God, we do believe in another dimension of reality, one that is not "seen" nor "heard" nor even "reasoned", but rather one that is posited into the soul of humanity from outside of the human/created realm itself, a knowledge that is "spiritually appraised" according to 1 Cor.

c..f 1Codr.2:9ff, and Theological Assumptions:

In conversion for instance, wherein the covenant word aspect of Christian spirituality will emphasis declaration and assent such as to "receive" by faith the word of life, the temple bodily presence aspect of Christology applied suggests an experiential | epistemology not often recognized. Alister McGrath, describing Blaise Pascal (and C.S. Lewis):

"For Pascal, there was little point in trying to persuade anyone of the truth of religious belief. The important thing, he argued, was to make people wish that it was true, having caught sight of the

rich and satisfying vision of reality it offered. Once such a desire was implanted within the human heart, the human mind would eventually catch up with its deeper intuitions.”

Example #2: The “Problem” of Evil & Suffering

Perhaps no other issue more reveals our perspective in life than the issue of suffering and evil in the world. Does the reality of suffering work against the knowledge of God? E.g. Is suffering an "ultimate" problem? It all depends—Faith seeking reason, or reason seeking faith?

A. Reason Seeking Faith:

As applied toward the belief in God:

Short Version:

1. A Perfectly good and all-powerful God would not allow evil.
2. There is evil

3. Therefore God does not exist

Unpacked Version:

1. God is by definition all-good, all-powerful and all knowing.
2. An all-good God would want to eliminate all evil
3. An all-powerful God would be able to do anything He wanted.
4. An all knowing God would now how.
5. If evil does exist, then God is either not all-good, all-powerful or all-knowing.
6. If God loses one of these attributes, He stops being God.

7. Therefore, God does not exist.

The Fundamental Assumption: Ultimate evil.

Ultimate Evil: That evil that is utterly pointless. Evil with a good purpose ceases to be ultimate evil.

B. Faith Seeking Faith: The Fundamental Assumption challenged:

Problem Restated:

1. If God exists, he does not allow any utterly pointless evil.
2. There is pointless evil from our perspective.

3. God does not exist.

Theocentric Response:

1. If God exist, he does not allow any utterly pointless evil.
2. God does exist.

3. Therefore there is no utterly pointless evil.

Fundamental Perspective:

Faith interprets suffering rather than suffering interpreting Faith.

God-centered Perspective vs. Human centered perspective.

Examples in Scripture:

Romans 5:3-5

... we exalt in hope of the glory of God, and not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1 Peter 1:6-7:

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in the praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:5-11:

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline... He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.

Beyond all doubt, His idea of "goodness" differs from ours... By the goodness of God we mean nowadays almost exclusively His Kindness. ... He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense.

The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word "love" and look on things as if man were the centre of them.

The fall... to that doctrine, man is now a horror to God and to himself and a creature ill-adapted to the universe not because God made him so but because he has made himself so by the abuse of his free-will... Christianity asserts that God is good; that he made all things good and for the sake of their goodness; that one of the good things He made, namely, the free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil; and that creatures, availing themselves of this possibility, have become evil.

Conclusion: *Need to reconsider the importance of Divine election, effectual calling as then realized through both an epistemology of participation AND an epistemology of proclamation!*

What Jonathan Edwards described as Religious Affections as consisting of BOTH heat (participation) and light (proclamation)

Here are two samples of the way Edwards would say it, the first taken from *Religious Affections* and the other from his *Charity and It's Fruits*.

As, on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding as well as an affected fervent heart; where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light; that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart"¹

A truly practical or saving faith, is light and heat together, or rather light and love, while that which is only a speculative faith, is only light without heat; and, in that it wants spiritual heat or divine love, is in vain, and good for nothing. A speculative faith consists only in the assent of the understanding; but in a saving faith which is only of the former kind, is no better than the faith of devils for they have faith so far as it can exist without love, believing while they tremble.²

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [Works], ed. by John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), Vol. 2:120

² Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* ("Works" Vol 2, Banner, p. 13)

This idea of “heat” and “light” perfectly coincides with two orientations in redemptive history in so far as they are both essential elements of the gospel. That is, a redemptive historical survey from Genesis to Revelations will demonstrate how there was *never* a time in all of redemptive history wherein human salvation *didn't* involve union with God as transacted through BOTH an objective-*covenantal*-proclamation oriented union as “by divine law” (“light”) and a subjective-*temple* (effectual, experiential) oriented union with as “by divine participation” (“heat”), albeit both operating within an ongoing dialectical relationship to one another. The instruments or “means of grace” that God utilized albeit in gracious condescension to our creaturely aptitudes are covenant and temple.

III. Missional Participation

... religious certainty is located only within the enclave of religious experience itself, and cannot be had—except “precariously in recollection” – in the ordinary life of the world.” (Newbigin, *Foolishness...*p. 12)

The temple flesh is at its best when it is most local and culture specific. It is a celebration of the salvation of flesh in its rich and created diversity of gender, race and culture. It is significant that the many nations/cultures in heaven are not neutered or even “blended” in heaven, but gloriously distinguished, if also never separate, as united in one faith and spirit and one liturgical vocation of worship.

As applied to salvation, God's temple body expresses the experiential transaction of our salvation by divine participation even as this infers an epistemology of participation vis-à-vis ecclesial conversion. Wherein justification, adoption and assurance is by faith alone such as to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, conversion unto faith (efficacious calling), faith itself, sanctification and perseverance is the gift of God by uniting himself in Christ to believers in the mystery of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. (c.f. Eph 1:15-22, 2:11ff)

A. The power of inclusion

- **Acts 2 (43-47)**

*Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.*³

Such is the vision we get of the ascended ministry of Christ in the present redemptive age at Pentecost. It is the description of a Christo-centric, sacramentally formed, confessional, multi-cultural and organic kind of unity that was in, not of, and for the world to the “praise of God” and in “favor with all the people.” It was, in summary, the description of a *missional ecclesiology!*

- **Early Church Spirituality of Conversion Revisited:**

In the early days of the Christian church, for example, it was the Gnostics, not the Catholics (orthodox), who were most inclined to redescribe the biblical materials in a new interpretive framework.

“Pagan converts to the [Christian] mainstream did not, for the most part, first understand the faith and then decide to become Christians; rather, the process was reversed: they first decided and then they understood. More precisely, they were first attracted by the Christian community and form of life. The reasons for attraction ranged from the noble to the ignoble and were as diverse as the individuals involved, but for whatever motives, they submitted themselves to prolonged catechetical instruction in which they practiced new modes of behavior and learned the stories of Israel and their fulfillment in Christ. Only after they had acquired proficiency in the alien Christian language and form of life were they deemed able intelligently and

³ cf. Above redemptive historical survey and especially the story of the early church in Act 2:1-47, note especially vs. 44-47, and then a more theological discourse about the relation of faith to participation in the life of God in, with and through the “temple” of the New Testament church in Ephesians 2:1- 22.

*responsibly to profess the faith, to be baptized”.*⁴

Only later, when Christianity became socially dominant, did this kind of catechesis disappear... p. 132 (note pre-christendom conversion vs. post-christendom conversion)

- Newbigin:
“The Congregation as Hermeneutic to the Gospel”, *Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*)

*Just as we insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a Church, so must we also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church.”*⁵

*The Gospel does not come to each of us in isolation. It comes to us through a particular book and through a particular fellowship... and that fellowship.. has maintained its existence in history as a visible organization with visible tests of membership, with officers, rules and ceremonies. It is a false spirituality, divorced from the teaching of the Bible, which regards this visible and continuing Church as of subordinate importance for the life in Christ.*⁶

The church is not the source of witness, it is the locus of witness.... The presence of a new reality, the presence in the shared life of the church of the spirit who is the arrobion of the kingdom, has become possible because of what Jesus has done, because of his incarnation, his ministry as the obedient child of his father, his suffering and death, his resurrection, AND his ascension into heaven and his session at the right hand of God... Its visible embodiment will be a community that lives by this story, a community whose existence is visibly defined in the regular rehearsing and reenactment of the story which has given it birth, the story of the self-emptying of God in the ministry of life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Its visible center as a continuing social entity is that weekly repeated event in which believers share bread and wine as Jesus commanded, as his pledge to them and their pledge to him that they are one with him in his passion and one with him in his victory...⁷

B. The power of Love in “One Anothering”

The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. How, then, is the dying culture going to consider us? Jesus says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians.

(Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of The Christian*, The Standard of Quality section)

e.g. We need to incorporate the world into the community of faith and love them, as they see the love we have for one another—this then is the “community apologetic”

1 Thessalonians 3:12 carries the same double emphasis: “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.” Here the order is reversed. First of all, we are to have love one toward another and then toward all men, but that does not change the double emphasis. Rather, it points up the delicate balance -- a balance that is not in practice automatically maintained.

Community of hope--

No amount of brilliant argument can make it sound reasonable to the inhabitants of the reigning plausibility structure. That is why I am suggesting that the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which

⁴ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984) p. 132

⁵ *Household of God*, P. 147.

⁶ *The Reunion of the Church* p. 29. c.f. in *Household of God*, Newbigin also states unequivocally how, “Just as we insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a Church, so must we also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church.” P. 147.

⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, Ch. 10, p. 120

believes it... if the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society, if Christians are to occupy the “high ground” which they vacated in the noontime of modernity, it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns...again, there can be no going back to Constantine era.. It will be by movements that begin with local congregations in which the reality of the new creation is present, known and experienced from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole life of society. (Newbigin, P. 232ff)

II. Missional Presupposition

Many people catch their presuppositions like some children catch childhood diseases. They have no idea where they come from. But that is not the way the thinker chooses his presuppositions. His presuppositions are selected on the basis of which presuppositions fit what is; that is, what presuppositions give solid answers concerning what is. It is only the Christian presuppositions which explain what is -- in regard to the universe and in regard to man.

(Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, Ch. 1)

No man can live without a world-view; therefore, there is no man who is not a philosopher.

(Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, Ch. 1)

A. Taking the “Roof Off”

As Christians we cannot begin speculating about knowledge by itself. We cannot ask how we know without at the same time asking what we know.... to say that we do not need to ask about the nature of reality when we ask about the nature of knowledge is not to be neutral but is in effect to exclude the Christian answer to the question of knowledge. (C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, p.,32, 33) *Romans 1:19ff*

It would appear, therefore that the truer, more effective and on all accounts more secure defense of Christianity and exposition of its essential content is not to take our starting point from those terms that will express the essential creedal confession of some of its most widely known historical deformations but rather from those terms that most fully express and give character to that redemptive religion which Christianity is. In other words, Christianity cannot receive proper understanding or its exposition proper orientation unless it is viewed as that which issues from, and is consummated in the accomplishment of, the covenant counsel and purpose of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” John Murray from *DOF* p.71)

- ❖ An approach that targets the playing field before playing”
- ❖ The challenge to become heretics against the modern/post-modern plausibility structure of either “scientific method”(modernity) or “fact free/value laden” society”
 - ❖ It assumes post-modern’s world without facts, only “values”... (.16)
 - ❖ It assumes the separation of private from public life (p.19)
 - ❖ It asserts “personal choice” as the ultimate arbiter.. which then doesn’t challenge this is being the ultimate arbiter...

This is, in the last analysis, the question as to what are one’s ultimate presuppositions. When man became a sinner he made of himself instead of God the ultimate or final reference point. And it is precisely this presupposition, as it controls without exception all forms of non-Christian philosophy, that must be brought into question. If this presupposition is left unquestioned in any field all the facts and arguments presented to the unbeliever will be made over by him according to his pattern. The sinner has cemented colored glasses to his eyes which he cannot remove. And all is yellow to the jaundiced eye. There can be no intelligible reasoning unless those who reason together understand what they mean by their words. (p.77)

What point of contact is there in the mind and heart of the unbeliever to which the believer may appeal when he presents to him the Christian view of life?

- ❖ Berger’s “signals of transcendence”
- ❖ Van Til’s “common struggle against sin, guilt and brokenness

- ❖ Invitation to suspend a view of “world without windows” and consider life “as if” a “world with windows”
E.g. The story of this our world, life, journey, purpose, from the vantage point of God as revealed in redemptive history...

B. Taking the Roof Off Applied: *Learning and Turning*

Thesis: *We all share in common with all people of all faiths and none a participation in God's providence. Our shared providence enables us to empathize someone who is "one of us," our Christian view of providence enables us turn people to the hope of the Gospel.*

I. Learning: Ask a question!

i. Initial Kinds of Questions: (the kind's people are used to...E.g. what, where kinds of questions)

Where are you going?

What do you do for a living?

I see that you are married, do you have any kids? (if same sex☺) Where do you live, how long... ?

Etc.

ii. Lead in Kinds of Questions: (the kinds that can open a "can of worms..." E.g. who kinds of questions)

What kind of beliefs do people have in your country/city?

Is your job going well? Why?

Why do you like your work?

It's tough raising kids these days-- what have you found to be helpful?

Did you see that article in the NYT today-- what did you think about X?

Etc.

iii. Turning Questions: (the kinds that get philosophical/religious as related to the following "talking points"-- why and "have you ever" kinds of questions)

That must be very difficult-- how have you been dealing with that?

It sounds like things are really going great for you... have you ever wondered if its going to come to an end?

Etc.

2. Turning: Talking Points

Note: A *talking point* is NOT an apologetic. We are *not* here defending God or Christ as against skepticism. We are not trying to prove God's existence or prove Christ's resurrection, etc. Rather we are directing a conversation in a manner that affirms the Christian faith as good news! The point is to direct our conversation to their sympathies for Christ, not the "credibility" of Christ. Thus, something like, "assuming for the moment that what I belief about Christ is true, what difference would it make in your situation..." or "here's how my belief in Jesus Christ responds/interprets what you are going through... "

A. I've Been Mistreated... (Gen.50:19-20, Acts 2:22ff, Heb. 4:15,

"That must be very difficult... you know however, this "mistreatment" theme occurs quite frequently in the Bible, and yet there is something that revealed with this theme that enables us to experience hope and forgiveness even..."

Talking Point: Empathize and yet direct them to a "pattern" whereby it is shown that God is so "almighty" that even those things intended for evil (thus to acknowledge evil) is directed by God to a greater good-- Thus the example of Joseph and most especially Christ...) These event point us to a God who often uses mistreatment to accomplish and even greater good-- our own forgiveness for the mistreatment we have done to God... etc. etc. AS then related to "anger" we can't forgive if we have not been forgiven, etc.)

B. I've Suffered a Tragedy... (2Cor.7:10, Rom. 5:3-5, 8:18-25, 1 Peter 1:6-7, Heb.12:5-11)

"Perhaps the only thing worse than the pain of your tragedy itself is that your tragedy would be meaningless or even the evidence of something malevolent that is triumphant. And yet when we do suffer, it is almost

instinctual to think "what have we done wrong... someone isn't pleased with me up there... The truth is, according to the Christian faith, that our instincts are right. That suffering really is something that points us to something being wrong. And yet, the Christian faith both recognizes the real pain of suffering and yet doesn't believe that there is such a thing as utterly pointless suffering. For those who trust themselves to Christ, we believe that our punishment was taken by Christ such that now, our present suffering is not "punishment" but "discipline" in that we are being prepared for heaven by it...

Key: We can't deny that ultimately, some people suffer as those who are beginning now to suffer the ultimate punishment-- thus a "hell on earth" albeit restrained by common grace, etc. And yet, we do direct people to the Christian faith that affirms a kind of suffering that is preparing us for heaven-- the key being that in Christ, our punishment is taken out of suffering, without Christ, our suffering is but a down payment for greater suffering to come...

C. *I'm dying...* (1 Peter 1:3-9, 23-25 1 Thess 4:13-18 1 Cor.15 (selections) 2 Cor.5:1-10 John 11, esp. vs. 17-27 John 14:1-6 Hebrews 11:13-16 Isaiah 40:1-11 Isaiah 41:10ff Psalm 23 Romans 8:1-4, 31-39 Romans 5:1-11 Revelations 14:12-13, 21:1-5 Psalms 46 Psalms 103:1-13 Psms. 116:15)

Mr. D... you know that you are dying don't you...do you think you are ready to meet God?... and/or "may I read you some comforting words from the Christian Bible... , or even "do you believe in heaven... would you like for me to read about heaven and how a person can know that they are going to heaven...?? Or "it must be hard to think about leaving some things behind-- what are some of those things... (then) do you look forward to anything after you die... etc. etc.

Key: Much of the "approach is determined by the circumstance of death--and yet generally people who are dying are much more ready to talk about it than those of us who are not dying... We should be lovingly, non-confrontationally, direct.

D. *I've done something horrible...* (Neh.9:17, Lam.3:22, Ps.103:8ff, Is.1:18, Rom.8:33, 2Cor.5:21, Is.53:6, Rom. 5:10ff, 1Tim.1:15, 1Pet.1:18ff, Eph.1:7-8, Joel 2:12-14, 1Jn.1:7)

You know, one of the real misunderstanding about the Christian faith is that a person must get "right" before he/she can get right with God. But this is not the case, in fact, one of the greatest things about Christ is that he did what he did "while we were still sinners..." I.e. God forgives not because of who we are but because of what God is... And when we put our confidence not in ourselves but in God's provision for forgiveness as by the work of Christ on the cross, we are forgiven of our sins.. No sin is too great for God to forgive. As told in the Bible not the sins of the "filthy rich" or the sins of a decant prostitute were too great for God to forgive..."

E. *Things are going great...* (Heb.1:2-3, Psalms 104, Acts 17:25-28ff)

I am really glad that things are going so well for you-- have you ever wondered why things are going so great? (listen) ... when things do well for me, something I wonder why.. I suppose especially since I don't ever think I deserve them... you know, perhaps this is an instinct in us that directs us to a greater truth-- The bible teaches that God, unlike what many think of him, really does love all people, such that he is gracious to do good things to people, even those who are not always good back-- in fact this common goodness is shown to direct us to a greater good-- one that is not for everyone. The greatest good is that all these wonderful things in this life would become even greater things in heaven for those who receive Christ. But what it means to receive Christ is to confess to God what our instincts tell us anyway, that none of us are so good as to deserve all that we have, and even more so heaven... etc. etc.

F. *I'm really feeling stress ...* (Prov. 16:3-4, 33:10, see above and providence)

I can really understand where you are coming from... Our stress is often related to our feeling either unloved (insecure) or not important (insignificant) Stress is often linked to circumstances that we judge (often unconsciously) is a threat to our security or significance. Its hard to know exactly all the reasons that some feel more stress than others, but one thing is for sure, the ultimate root is that we perhaps

instinctually pick up that we are severed from our ultimate source of security and significance... But there is a way back... etc. etc. In Christ we are completed! (Col.2:10)

Etc.

III. Missional Proclamation

I. 3 Dynamics:

A. Message Centered (Special Revelation-Our Biblical Theology)

1. "Message"- A willingness to properly know the gospel as God would have us to know it.
2. "Centered" - A willingness to adapt our methods to our message

B. Culture Sensitive (General Revelation- God's Providence in the Recipient)

1. "Culture"- Recognizing that God was, is, and will continue to be sovereign in governing the circumstances *to* which we are called to be witnesses.
2. "Sensitive"- As distinguished from "centered" our witness would take into consideration the world views, lifestyles, felt needs and present forces for or against ministry.

C. Person Realistic (General Revelation- God's Providence in the Witness)

1. "Person"- Recognizing the God was, is and will continue to be sovereign in governing the circumstances *from* which we are called to be a witness.
2. "Realistic"- A willingness to think soberly about ourselves, our abilities, our resources so as to do all things relatively well for the glory of Christ.

II. Two Resulting Guidelines:

1. It must not eliminate the "offense" of the gospel. (1 Cor.1:18, 23-24)

The cross is an "offense" to those who are perishing. What the Bible has clearly taught, we cannot marginalize or avoid. "If we do, we have not adapted to the culture but have capitulated to it.

2. It must avoid any unnecessary cultural offense. (1 Cor. 9:19-22)

Where the Bible has not spoken, and has left the conscience free, we must not elevate human applications and inferences to make them absolutes. Moreover, where we can, in good conscience, be "like the world" so as to "reach the world," we ought then to consider doing it. (Of course, we must be very careful to put this through a thoroughly informed theology.)

III. Gospel Illustrations:

1. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11ff) — For those who underestimate the depth of God's love for sinners (c.f. John 4, The Women at the well)
2. The Rich Young Ruler (Mt. 19:16ff)—For those who overestimate their reliance upon good morals to gain God's approval.
3. Roman's Road-- For those who are ready for the gospel explained

1:1-4, 16-- Not a new religion, but a new reality

2:1ff --Our Great Mistake (Sin) (what it is and is not and the natural consequences)

3:9ff—No Distinction—We are all Guilty of the Ultimate Sin and Deserving of God's Just Rejection and ultimate Death

3:21-26—No Distinction— Our Saving Grace

5:1-11, 20-- Our Ultimate Hope

7:24-8:1, 31-39-- Our Assurance

12:1ff—Our New Life

16:25ff—God's Promise

Conclusion: