

A Culture of Evangelism – Part 2

Various Texts

Introduction: We come back tonight to consider for a few minutes this idea of a culture of evangelism. My argument to you last week was essentially that a healthy church being built by the Spirit of God through the Word of God will be the best tool in the hands of God to reach the lost. God has promised to build the church and He has promised to build the church through the church being used as ambassadors for Christ to take the Gospel of peace to the world around us. When we separate evangelism from the context of the local body of Christ we lose the focus of evangelism and the fervency of evangelism and the affirmation of evangelism.

But now the question is, how do we seek to grow in having this culture of evangelism here at Newton Bible? We certainly don't want to have a myopic view of the church and see evangelism as the only aspect of her mission which matters. If we did do that, then we would see discipleship fall by the wayside, we would gear our every gathering to be about the lost and for the lost and we would ultimately weaken the church. So, without making reaching the lost the preeminent purpose of the church, how do we seek to grow in being evangelistic? How do we seek to build within our DNA a loving concern for the lost and a risk taking culture which willingly sacrifices to reach out to the unsaved? Well, there is much to say here, but let me give you 6 marks of a healthy culture of evangelism. Each of these are then to be areas of pursuit for us as the church as we seek to reach out to the lost around us. Think of these marks as logs that we throw onto the fire which is the healthy culture of evangelism. The more of these logs we have, and the healthier the logs are, the hotter the fire will burn. If one of these logs is taken off, then the fire dies down. So, as we pursue these marks, they will help to heat the fires of evangelism in our heart.

A Culture of Evangelism is:

1. **Compelled by the Love of Christ** – 2 Cor. 5:14-21; John 13:34-35; Romans 1:7-8; 2 Thess. 1:3-4
 - a. The first mark we will consider is the one of first priority, and it is to be compelled by the love of Christ. A church family that is ever more aware of God's great love for them will be a church that is driven to love others in return. And this love of God will constrain them and compel them and control them in their interactions with one another, and with unbelievers.
 - b. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 says it this way.
 - c. Did you notice how the love of Christ changes how we view our life – it is no longer ours to live, but Christ's. And this love of Christ changes how we view others. We no longer regard them according to the flesh – in other words, according to their position in society, their skin color, their gender, their wealth, their success in business, etc. No, now we see them as those who need to be

brought near to God through Christ. And we see ourselves as the ambassador of Christ, representing Him here on Earth with this glorious task of telling others how they can be made right with God.

- d. This love compels us first to love God and then to love Christ's Church and then to love those outside the church. And as we love God and love one another, Jesus tells us in John 13 that we must love one another and in so doing everyone will know that we are followers of Jesus.
 - e. This chain of being loved by God and then loving one another and being a testimony to the world of God's great and glorious Gospel is seen in Romans 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1 in Paul's description of those churches. He thanks God for how they have been such a powerful testimony to the power of God in the Gospel.
 - f. So, this must mark a church that is fervent in evangelism. We must be controlled by the love of Christ. This will compel us to be evangelists together.
2. **Conscious of God's Worth** – Ps. 130:3-4; Luke 8:38-39
 - a. The next mark flows out of that first one – a culture of evangelism is ever conscious of God's worth.
 - b. ³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. (Ps. 130:3-4 ESV)
 - c. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. (Lk. 8:38-39 ESV)
 - d. The better we understand of our great sinfulness the more we will grow in our fear of the Lord and this will move us to speak up to others about the great things God has done for us.
 3. **Unashamed of the Gospel** – Rom. 1:16-17
 - a. The culture of evangelism is also unashamed of the Gospel. If a church is to be a powerful witness used by the Lord to reach the lost, then they must have an unshakable confidence in what God has said about what the lost need. They do not need entertainment or marketing gimmicks or neat programs or cute ministries of community enrichment. What they need is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And a healthy culture of evangelism in a church must see people as they really are, not as they present themselves. They must see them as those in rebellion against God and in need of a Savior. Their main problem is not their rent that is due, or their wife who just left them or the next big promotion at work which will fix it all. What they need is the saving grace of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation – to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 4. **Mighty in the Scriptures** – Acts 18:24; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15
 - a. A culture of evangelism must also be mighty in the Scriptures. This is how Apollos is described in Acts 18:24. You will remember that Apollos is the man that some in the church in Corinth were saying they were party to. He was their man, their teacher. This happened in part because Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures. We know from 2 Timothy 2 that this requires hard work:

- i. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15 ESV)
 - b. That is an instruction for those who lead Christ's church with the Word, but it is true of all who would seek to handle the word. And that is exactly what evangelism is – it is handling the word of God, and the truth about God as you tear down the mental strongholds of others as they oppose the Gospel. So, if we don't know our Bibles and we don't know the truth, then we will be all the more timid to speak up. So, we seek to grow week in and week out in our knowledge of the truth so that we can be mighty in the Scriptures and obey the command of 1 Peter 3:15:
 - i. ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (1 Pet. 3:15 ESV)
5. **Accountable to One Another** – Heb. 10:24-25
 - a. And then another mark of this healthy culture of evangelism is that it is accountable to one another. And that is not a bad thing, but a very encouraging thing. This is not the accountability of a boss to an employee who is looking for whether or not you got the job done. Rather, in this healthy culture of evangelism there is a sense in which we are all on the same team in seeking the lost. We are all in the game and we are all looking for ways to engage the lost and speak the Gospel to them.
 - b. Evangelism is not a ministry of the church which, like say . . . nursery . . . where you get to decide whether or not you want to be involved. We are all Great commission Christians and we all have to be in the game on this one. And so, a healthy culture of evangelism is spurred along by the encouragement of one another. Like Hebrews 10 says, we don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but rather we gather intentionally thinking about how we can exhort one another to love and good works. Well, one of those good works we should be mutually accountable about is the work of evangelism.
 - c. And this creates an environment where it is expected for unbelievers to be around because we have invited them. And so, when I bring my non-Christian friend to a church gathering and I introduce them to you, in a healthy culture of evangelism you would gladly welcome them to the gathering. We don't change the focus of the gathering to be the lost – we keep the focus always on Christ. But we expect the lost to come because we are all engaged in this work of telling others about Christ. And as we do then, we are expecting the team here to support, encourage, and come alongside those gospel relationships.
 - d. This also creates a context in which it is uncomfortable for those who are not in the game. The spectators among us who have sheltered ourselves from the lost are now challenged by the examples they see around them of other Christians. Part of the reason the church today struggles with evangelism is because the church of yesterday struggled with it. And we have passed that culture on through our discipleship. It just doesn't seem that odd to be a Christian and not be engaged in

seeking to help persuade other people to be a Christian. This ought not be, and by the grace and power of God it can change among us.

6. **Fervent in Prayer** – John 15:5; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4
 - a. But it will only change as we are fervent in prayer. That is the last mark of this culture of evangelism that we will consider tonight. It is last because it is the fitting lid for these previous truths. Without this fervency of prayer, we will make much effort and have no success. That is what Jesus said in John 15:5:
 - i. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:5 ESV)
 - b. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. This spirit of dependency upon Christ will most certainly look like a fervency of prayer. God delights to answer prayer that is prayed in accordance with His will. And it is most definitely His will to make us into a church that is a bright light in our community for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this to happen we must be dependent upon him in fervent prayer. And how should we pray when we think about evangelism?
 - c. We should pray perseveringly for words and boldness:
 - i. ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:18-20 ESV)
 - d. We should pray steadfastly and watchfully for an open door and clarity:
 - i. ² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison-- ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Col. 4:2-4 ESV)

Small Group Questions:

- Name the mark from above that is the most lacking in your life. What are some things you can do to pursue growth in this area?
- What ways should we pray for evangelism? Pray that way now as a group for yourselves, and for our church family as a whole.