

What is your initial, knee jerk reaction when you hear this word? (pause)
Evangelism.

A few of you slid forward in your seat, got this eager look on your face, and can't wait to hear the rest of the message. Most of you are looking a bit like a deer caught in the headlights, startled and nervous about what I'm about to share.

Often the thought of evangelism scares us because we worry we don't know enough Bible or the right words to say.

Let me give you a bit of reassurance as we get started this morning- evangelism is not about what you know, it's about who you know- Jesus.

The best thing I can tell you this morning is that it's not about you- if they choose to follow Jesus, that's not on you.

If they choose to reject Jesus, that's not on you either.

You are called to be faithful to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, trust God to then do His part and work on their hearts.

What is Evangelism - The act of sharing the gospel is called evangelism.

- Evangelism is the sob of God. It is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city.
- It is the cry of Paul, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."
- Evangelism is the heart-winning plea of Moses. "But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

- It is the cry of John Knox, “Give me Scotland or I die.”
 - It is the declaration of John Wesley, “The world is my parish.”
 - It is the sob of parents in the night, weeping over a prodigal child.

The key to evangelism is a burden for the lost.

We’re going to look at how the gospel continues to expand beyond the walls of Jerusalem as we focus on this idea of evangelism.

Today, may your boldness be encouraged by Philip. Read Acts 8:26-40. *Philip demonstrates three steps to sharing the gospel in this narrative.*

1. Listen

The first step of evangelism is to listen.

Sometimes we like to jump into the conversation, too often without taking the time to get to know a person or understand the circumstance we’re trying to address.

It starts with listening to God.

Philip has been leading a rather successful ministry in Samaria, so it may have come as a surprise to be told to go elsewhere.

But God knew he was the right man for the job and has an angel speak to him, giving directions to head to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

Philip gets there and the Holy Spirit prompts him to approach a nearby chariot. Once again Philip listens and obeys.

This begs the questions...How do we hear God today?

I suggest it begins by reading the Bible. God has given us a book which He inspired so that we might know Him and how He wants us to live.

If we were to take the word Bible as an acronym, it would spell out “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth”.

It continues with prayer. I’m not saying you will necessarily audibly hear what God is saying to you, but as we open ourselves up to Him in prayer, He often gives us that gentle nudge, much like the still, small whisper Elijah experienced as he was waiting to see God.

God also speaks to us through other Christians. We’ve been given a church family so we can encourage each other in the ways of God.

We should seek input from mature believers as we are sorting things out.

As we listen to God, we also need to listen to the lost.

When Philip climbed into the chariot, the eunuch began to share his confusion over what he was seeing in the writings of Isaiah. This provided a launching point for Philip to share Jesus the Messiah with this man.

The lost will let you know how to reach them if we take the time to listen.

Church, pay attention to what they’re telling you is happening in their life, the questions that they may have.

Understand that some of those questions are being asked to avoid hearing the gospel message.

Unfortunately, some of our churches have created a track record that has to be overcome.

Gandhi, the famous Hindu known for advocating civil disobedience, once tried to attend a church in India that was normally attended by people foreign to India.

When the usher saw him enter, he suggested that Gandhi might want to go down the street to the church attended by the nationals so that he might feel more comfortable.

This is the reason Gandhi stated, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians.”

Of course, one church tried to address these stereotypes with a statement on their web site that said something like this: Every church is judgmental. Boring. Political. Intolerant. Irrelevant. And churches are just after your money. And everyone acts holier than thou, or at least holier than you.

2. Discernment

The next step is to discern the situation.

The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 and this prompted some questions from him- who is the author talking about- himself or someone else?

There was a time I found myself in a similar situation.

A young man had been studying the scriptures and, to be frank, was trying to find a way to justify some things he had gotten caught up in.

We sat down together and discussed the text he was trying to twist and I had to tell him some hard truths that he wasn't ready to hear.

But because I was patient with him and didn't just write him off as lost, he came back a few months later ready to get help and leave behind the sinful things he had been trying to justify.

Many times this discerning process is filled with questions.

Asking the person to clarify things until you get to the root of the matter.

Bring up the questions their comments raise, then offer to find the answers together.

When we do this, it becomes less threatening- you've made yourself vulnerable at a time when they're already feeling like they've set themselves out there and are taking a chance.

3. Share

The third step we see from Philip is to share.

Britain's King George V was to give the opening address at a special disarmament conference, with a speech relayed by radio to the United States. As the broadcast was about to begin, a cable broke in the New York radio station, and more than a million listeners were left without sound.

A junior mechanic in the station, Harold Vivien, solved the problem by picking up both ends of the cable and allowing 250 volts of electricity to pass through him. He was the living link that allowed the king's message to get through.

We are the link between God and the unsaved. We have His message, and we are told to take that message to those who need to hear it.

Philip begins with the history of who Jesus is then carries on into what that means for the eunuch at that present time.

It works the same way for us. We want to help people see the truth of the events as recorded in the Bible, then see how that impacts their present life.

An important part of this step is to allow a response.

What good has it done for us to share the good news of Jesus if we never give them a chance to respond?

Here we are, dangling the best gift they could ever receive out there in front of them.

They may or may not be ready, but we'll never know if we never ask.

That's why each Sunday we offer a time of invitation.

We want to give every opportunity to respond to the good news that Jesus Christ gave His life that you might receive forgiveness and life everlasting. Won't you make that decision today?