

What we're learning in Holy Homes

Holy Homes is a group of believers who meet on 2nd & 4th Mondays of each month at 6:30 pm to sharpen one another by discussing topics relevant to having a holy home. These notes are a summary of what the Holy Homes group discussed in the last meeting. If you're interested in joining this group call Josh Norris at 884-4762.

Evangelism

Is relational evangelism really the best method, or is it just a way of avoiding the need for "embarrassing" public evangelism. Let's look at the subject of sharing the gospel together.

1) First, why do we share the gospel?

God commands us to make disciples, but this shouldn't be our primary motive. Love for God and a desire to see Him glorified should be our primary motive. The more voices in the choir of God, the more glory and adoration, the better. We are also compelled simply out of a love of God. And if we love God, then we love our neighbors. (1 John 4:20-21). Another aspect of sharing is that it's a way for us to be blessed by suffering for Christ. (Phil. 1:29)

2) If we're not evangelizing unbelievers, can we truly be doing what God intends?

The idea of a Christian, whose very name means "little Christ", not sharing the gospel of Christ is ridiculous. If we truly regard others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:3) then we can hardly justify putting our own image or selfishness ahead of the souls of others. God has called us to represent Him as ambassadors to the world. (1 Peter 2:9, II Cor. 5:18-21). God expects us to evangelize whenever the opportunity is there. (2 Tim 4:2, 1 Peter 3:15). That said, the life of a believer isn't evangelism 24/7. We also spend time encouraging and equipping other saints.

3) St. Francis of Assisi said "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." What are the good and bad things about this kind of witnessing by actions?

Obviously, witnessing by actions, separated completely from verbalizing the gospel, is grasping after the wind. Words must be present. The idea of actions speaking louder than words is usually why people believe witnessing in the context of relationships is the most effective. If we're walking as a true disciple, our lives will make these opportunities readily available. (1 Peter 3:15) Anyone can do it, even if they're shy or not well spoken. However, we must be aware that this can be deceitful to the evangelist. It's easy to think that this is less embarrassing and that it just "comes naturally". In reality, if we're living the lives of a faithful disciple, it is still be embarrassing and uncomfortable. We should still share Christ. Often times in relationships it can be even harder because we fear damaging the relationship and losing that person as a friend.

4) Why is door to door evangelism, or open air preaching often viewed as less effective? Is this a fair view?

Since it's done stranger to stranger we tend to think it is less effective because a prior relationship does not exist. While having a relationship with the person you are sharing with is helpful, it's not a necessity. The gospel is effective in all situations. Pentecost was not done in the context of a relationship. Sometimes this method of evangelism is pushed aside simply because most people are too embarrassed to do this kind of witnessing, so they play the "relational evangelism is more effective" card. The question then becomes "Are you witnessing relationally?". People are afraid to be viewed as fanatical lunatics or just plain annoying. If we believe grace works, and the gospel is powerful, we should believe that these are obstacles which can be overcome by God's grace. One danger to keep in mind, however, is that post-regeneration followup is difficult when witnessing to strangers. Often times it's hard to get these new believers "plugged in" to a local church.

5) Is it legitimate to view Sunday church meetings as an evangelism tool? Was this technique used in the early church?

Yes, however that shouldn't be the focus of Sunday services. The gospel should be a frequent part of church meetings because we never know who is attending. It is also a great reminder and encourager to believers. We should be sharing throughout the week with everyone we meet. The early church, seen after Pentecost in Acts 2, was a church of new believers. They were fired up about their Savior and, with the Holy Spirit's help, they were living as Christians ought. The early church preached the gospel wherever and whenever, but Acts 2:42 makes it clear that fellowship was a primary focus when they gathered. Acts 5:42 says that they preached in the temple and in houses. They shared the gospel in both relational and open air formats. It's possible that non-believers may have been invited to dinner and cared for if needy as well.

6) How do most believers feel about sharing the gospel? Why do you think this is so?

Our culture has taught us to be very private and individualistic. We resent people pushing ideas on us, and we know that others feel the same way. We can also feel inconvenienced, under equipped, fearful, and embarrassed. But these feelings can only come from weak faith and a poor understanding of who God is and what He has done for us. If we truly believe He is watching us, and is ready to reward us for our faithfulness and that He, sovereign and all powerful God, creator of everything, desires we testify of Him and glorify Him, how could we NOT share? It's truly weak faith.

7) Does the bible give any legitimate reasons to not share the gospel or is there anyone we shouldn't share the gospel with?

The bible makes it clear that grace is for everyone and nobody is beyond it's reach. Paul sought an audience with people as high as Caesar and as low as slaves. The Bible is clear that we should not persist in sharing with those who have rejected us. At that point it's best for us to simply let our lives witness to them. But mostly we need to continue praying and witnessing.