

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

Evangelism Isn't Complicated: You Don't Need Another Course

by Stephen Kneale

Evangelism is often over-complicated. It pays to ask, what do we actually need to go about the business of the gospel? When you think about it, not much. When we get down to brass tacks, I'd suggest:

1. Belief in, and understanding of, the gospel
2. Receipt of the Holy Spirit
3. Somebody to tell

You might argue you also need a mouth to speak, but you could write if you can't talk and you can talk if you can't write. But I'd venture those three things are about all you need.

In many ways, they go hand in hand. If we truly believe the gospel, then we must understand it already in order to believe it. If we believe the gospel and have trusted in Jesus as a result, then we receive the Holy Spirit the moment we have faith. The Spirit works on our hearts to make it possible, and ultimately cause us, to believe (*regeneration*) and then, when we express faith in response to his work upon our hearts, he comes to live in us forever after (*indwelling*). If you trust in Jesus, he promises us the Holy Spirit. You don't have one without the other.

The one that doesn't necessarily go with the others is that you need someone to tell. But, let's be honest, unless you live in the arctic tundra on your bill, people are about. And unless you happen to be so physically or mentally impaired that you have no means of communication whatsoever – written, spoken, electronic, anything – you have the physical capability to tell someone the gospel. Most of us are not seriously physically impeded and living in the arctic tundra making it utterly impossible for us to share the gospel in any way whatsoever.

But if that's all you need to share the gospel – knowing it, receipt of the Holy Spirit, a mouth and someone to tell – why do we make it so complicated? Courses on how to evangelize every different set of people you can think of abound. Books on the subject are plethora. Your basic 'how to' on evangelism. We have courses that exist to bring people to so that you have an evangelistic framework built into it so all you essentially have to do is play a video and run through a booklet of questions. Most of those questions spend a long time dancing around things like 'worldview' (whatever that is) or asking all sorts of stuff about culture in the hope that we might lead it round, eventually, to the Lord.

And I'm not saying any of that stuff is wrong. If you find it helpful, that's great. If you're seeing fruit through using it, that's great too. But I can't help but feel the endless courses and books exist for a different reason. It's not that we don't really know how to do evangelism, or we don't think we're properly equipped for mission. Some of probably do *feel* that latter one because of what we have communicated by the very need for courses and books! If you need courses and book and specially trained evangelists, this must be hard stuff. But it just isn't true. If you know the gospel – if you can tell someone the gospel in a sentence or two – you've got what you need. If you trust in Jesus, so you know the gospel and you have his Spirit with you, you've got all you need. Our problem isn't that we don't know how, or we are certain we need help, it's either that we don't really want to or – for a host of reasons – we've scared ourselves into making it all far more complicated than we ought.

What is stopping you from simply asking any of the following things?

1. Do you know what the gospel is?
2. What do you know about Jesus?
3. Have you ever read the Bible and would you like to?
4. You know I'm a Christian, do you know what it is we believe? Can I tell you?

These might not be the best questions. Circumstances or context might mean you've got better ones. Frankly, in my community, the number one starting point for all evangelistic conversations is Hell. Most Muslims around us already believe in judgement and are onboard with the idea, we just disagree on who's going and how anybody can make sure they're not. Many white British Oldhammers know that we're a church that believes the Bible so must believe in Hell too. Similarly, death is all around us, so asking people if they know where they're going when they die isn't as crass as it might seem to some people. Hell isn't a bad place to start for us and we've had some brilliant gospel conversations that start exactly there.

But my point isn't to give you a set of questions you can work your way through. It isn't to give you a 'how to' on evangelism. I, frankly, don't know your church, community or wider context. What I do know is that if you're a genuine Christian, you know the gospel and there isn't anything stopping you from getting on and sharing it with people.

You don't need another course. You don't need extensive training. You need a sentence or two that explains who Jesus is and why he matters. And you know it because you already believe it. And if you know it and believe it, you are equipped with everything you need to go and share it with other people.

Given all of that, why not see who you can tell the gospel to today? You might just be surprised what happens if you just open your mouth and tell people what you already know.