

Evangelism I

by Dana Congdon

Dana Congdon emphasizes the importance of evangelism and community outreach, encouraging believers to actively engage in sharing the gospel.

Duration: 1:15:26

Scripture: Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:1-3, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 6:33, Acts 8:12, Acts 28:31, Romans 10:15

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of gospeling, which he describes as a combination of show and tell. He refers to the gospel of Matthew, highlighting Jesus' authority in confronting his antagonists and proclaiming the truth about God. The speaker also shares his practical goals for a gospel meeting, including testimonies, songs, and a concise message. He emphasizes the need to watch and learn from Jesus' example in evangelism, highlighting his love, purity, and righteousness, as well as his crucifixion and resurrection.

Transcript

Well, I was a Southern Baptist preacher, this is true, I am not any longer. You stop being that officially when you tear up your ordination papers. I needed that ordination because of my own insecurity in my younger days, but after a while the Lord got a hold of me and I couldn't figure out what I was anymore, so there's no sense carrying around human ordination.

So, one day, with a lot of gusto, you know, I stood up in the assembly and tore up my paper. I said, now I'm just Brother Dana. And I feel like the Lord's enabled me to minister more since that time than before, when I had the paper.

Do you understand that? Anyway, I also don't think that I am an evangelist. I sometimes find myself doing the work of an evangelist. You know, Paul tells Timothy, do the work of an evangelist.

So, we don't really know if Timothy was an evangelist or he was just told to fill in the shoes here. And I feel like I end up doing the work of an evangelist many times because it's like the Lord has a whole line in the army standing up here and says, okay, who's going to evangelize? And everybody takes one step back. Believe me, I don't step forward.

But something happens. And everybody says, I'll pray about it, I'll think about it, I'm going home. And so, I found myself in all kinds of strange and interesting situations.

Recently, I have done an absolutely absurd thing. But I felt God was in it and sure enough, He is. Now, on Tuesday nights, we just rent out a secular theater in the middle of the town that I live in.

It holds 650 people. And we have a gospel meeting. We do skits, we do videos, we sing a lot of music, we preach the gospel every week.

And we've been doing that since October and only two people have gotten saved. But I want to tell you something. There are people who aren't Christians who come to that meeting every week and they're stunned by the reality of Christ.

Now, I think that's significant because our understanding of evangelism should not be, okay, we give it one shot, rake in who we can and quit. But a real understanding of evangelism is, we faithfully witness and watch the Holy Spirit capture somebody's life, begin to convince them, begin to show them. And we sit there every Tuesday night and here's a guy up on the soundboard.

You know, he's a secular man. I won't even tell you about his lifestyle, but this man is just not the Lord. He's up there working the sound and everything.

And we say, okay, let's stand up and sing. I will call upon the Lord. This guy stands up.

We were so amazed. I looked out there. He's halfway out and he stood up.

And we said, okay, now everybody clap at this point. The guy's clapping. And after about the third meeting, he came up to me and said, Dana, what you said really meant something to me.

Now, he doesn't even know what's going on. I don't know if he's heard the gospel or, you know. But something is stirring in his life to where he says, you know, actually he flies all over the United States, but he always makes it a point to be home on Tuesday because he wants to be part of the meeting.

You know, and so, oh well. So, who can outguess God or know what's going on, but we just need to faithfully witness. And so, we call that meeting Good News Tuesdays.

It's kind of fun. If you remember that, pray for that. We need a lot of prayer on that thing.

I would like to share with you for this Saturday night and then Sunday morning and then, Lord willing, next weekend, some thoughts about evangelism. Some thoughts out of the scriptures, some thoughts that I have regarding it. And I just hope, this is really my hope, that you guys have been chewing around about this thing of evangelism so long, thinking about it, praying about it, that God has got you just about to the point where if somebody just says, go, something's going to happen.

Now, that's just what I hope will happen because I just wish I had something profound to say, but unfortunately, profound is not a word in my dictionary. It's just keep it simple. So, I'll share with you some things that I know and I hope it precipitates that which the Spirit wants and has been wanting for a long, long time.

Father, I make that my prayer and I know I come to the One who's able to do tremendous things, the Lord of the Harvest. You've got a way of raising up harvesters that just makes us unable to say anything other

than, here am I, send me. Lord, we just pray that You will cast Your spiritual net over all of us and capture us for Your purpose and Your glory.

We commit these times into Your hands. In Jesus' name, Amen. I'd like for you to turn to the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew.

I'm just going to look at two verses to begin with tonight. You know, I really do rejoice being here with you. It's wonderful to see, when I find an individual who has a burden for lost people, I rejoice in that.

And even more so to find a company of God's people that's being exercised over this thing. This is really precious. Really a precious moment.

It's also wonderful when I feel the spiritual reality is there is already harvesting going on. Now, that makes it even more wonderful. I don't know all the things that go on here.

I hear just second-hand about the sisters' meetings on Friday where I think the sickle's gone in a few times and harvested for the Lord. You know, it's just exciting to see what God's going to do. And it's wonderful to get together with God's people and talk about these things, these matters of the Gospel.

Because when we begin to obey the Lord in this matter of evangelism, it puts us all on the edge of our seat. We have to depend on the Lord. And He comes through.

Some Christians just plain wake up as the Lord arrests us in this matter. I'd like for us to look at a Scripture, chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. Just a few verses. Now, in those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord. Make his path straight. John the Baptist, that was his message.

Now, in chapter 4, verse 17, this is the summary statement, as it were, that Matthew makes regarding what Jesus did after John the Baptist was put into prison. From that time, meaning from when John was put into prison, from that time, Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We have a goal in mind here.

I want to share with you a practical goal. The longer range goal is that we, as the Lord's people, could engage in outreach and compassion and the Gospel all the time. But I also have a short range goal, and that is a Gospel meeting next Sunday morning.

Now, I want to explain, I want to architect for you the kind of Gospel meeting we're going to have so you'll all understand. Next Sunday morning, things are going to be different around here. First of all, the meeting's only going to be an hour long, which is a miracle in itself.

I understand Harrison preached for an hour and a half the other week. But I want to give you an idea of how long it's going to be. One hour meeting.

We're planning to have a couple of four to five minute testimoniettes. Three songs, and deep songs. He's got the whole world in his hands and others.

We're going to have special music. I'm going to bring my guitar and sing out a song, preach the Gospel, and then we're going to have a time of response. All in one hour.

Now, that sounds simple enough. Now comes the punchline. Your involvement.

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to tell you what I feel, and then you just pray about it for yourself. But I want to encourage everyone here to bring somebody next Sunday. We are going to see an amazing work of God's providence.

A miracle. If you will be open to it, God will put somebody on your heart in this week, get you to invite them to this meeting, have them say yes. You will pick them up and bring them to the meeting and sit with them.

Now, this is a miracle. Now, there's nobody here too old or too young. Everybody here should seriously consider that the Lord wants you to bring somebody next week.

Now, folks, can I be honest with you about the Lord's goodness? We can come up with the best Gospel meeting here next week, sing great songs, preach the Gospel, and if no lost people are here, then what happens usually is Jesus invests about two ounces of Holy Spirit, we all feel good, and that it was a blessing. Now, if lost people are here, if there are a hundred adults here who don't know the Lord next Sunday, watch out. We could have the lousiest meeting.

I could lose my place and not be able to preach for laryngitis. The singer could break the string on the guitar. The testimony wamble on for a half an hour, and yet the Spirit of God would be here in such a powerful way that people would be absolutely glued to the seat as the simple truth about Jesus is declared.

Now, that's how good God is. One of the keys is this. Christians need to take it seriously, and especially this matter of bringing somebody to the meeting.

If you bring somebody to the meeting, we're going to see something happen. Now, does that make you just a little bit nervous? Well, some of you already have somebody on your mind. You've been doing your cultivating work.

Now, this is harvest time. Next Sunday is Harvest Sunday. And I'm not a farmer myself, but while I was going to school, I spent some time out in a farming community, and I learned something out there.

The time that the farmers worked the hardest was harvest time. Now, when harvest time came, they hardly even slept. They worked all through the night.

You know, they put lights on their tractors and literally harvested through the night. Worked day and night, day and night. Then when they finished that farm, they went over to their neighbor's farm.

They all joined in and harvested that farm. And they worked very hard. Harvesting time is spiritual work.

And we need to be exercised. And thank God you all are exercised already about this whole matter. Now, let's see what happens.

Here's my point. I'll talk about it a little bit more tomorrow. There's an amazing miracle that happens.

When somebody starts praying, coincidences start happening. You ever notice that? When you stop praying, coincidences stop happening. Now, you know what I mean, coincidences.

I'm talking about coincidences with capital C. And when somebody is willing and says, okay, Lord, I don't know exactly who I should ask for this thing, but if you'll put somebody on my heart, I will check it out. Watch out. Because into your little heart will come, how about Charlie Gonzales? It's probably going to be somebody that you wouldn't choose naturally.

The person you don't get along with at work, the person you think least likely to succeed in this Christian business. And the Lord may put them on your heart. Now, what I'd like for you to do, I'm serious about this.

Now, what night's prayer meeting? Wednesday night? Wednesday night. This Wednesday night, I'm just very specific. I don't think we ought to just be all the time ambiguous.

You know what I think happens when I see God move sometimes wonderfully in gospel meetings? You know what happened to a prayer meeting before? This Wednesday night, we bring out here a blackboard and write down the names of the people that are on your heart to invite. We put them on the board and we pray specifically for these people. You know it's spiritual warfare to get them here.

And if you just invite them and they say yes and you don't pick them up, I've learned by now 80% of them won't come. Now, there's a lot of spiritual flack out there in the atmosphere to prevent people from coming. Next Sunday may be the coldest day in Richmond's history.

I don't know, but the enemy monkey's around with all kinds of thermostats and various things. Now, listen folks, spiritual warfare is what we're engaging in and we're getting on the front line. You start thinking about somebody and praying about somebody, we get specifically and say, hey, this is my boss here, Joe Fates, and we need to pray for him.

Something starts happening to this guy Joe. So, here we are. Well, there's the challenge out in front of you.

Throw down the gauntlet, let's see what happens. If you really try and somebody comes to your heart and you really invite them and they say yes and then say no and you come next Sunday and you don't have somebody with you, that's perfectly all right. We'll let you in.

I'll be at the door checking, but I'll let you in. You know, it is exciting because the Gospels come alive. You know, people sometimes say Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is baby stuff and then you go on to the epistles and the deep things and when you're really just about to be raptured, you read Revelation and go.

I think that the Gospels, although it's true they share the basic facts about Jesus, the Gospels need revelation and they're exciting and when we start gosselling, it's as if the Gospels come alive. It's Palestine too. It's an experience all over again.

And suddenly the Lord of the Harvest is moving among people and suddenly the Spirit of God is going out as a convincer, a convictor, an illuminator and suddenly the great evangelist stands in our midst, the Lord Jesus Himself. Now, let's never forget who the great evangelist is with a capital E. That's Jesus. And when He comes and stands in our midst, when we're committed to this matter, I tell you, it's gospel time.

And suddenly it's as if there's an awakening of gifts of the Spirit that function in the body of Christ. You realize when you look at that list in 1 Corinthians 12 of the various gifts of the Spirit, you know, most of those gifts are utilized primarily for outreach. Gifts of miracles, gifts of healing, discernment of spirits, these are used also in the body of Christ.

But have you ever experienced this? I am not a spiritually dynamite person. I don't go around saying I got this gift and that gift, but I'll tell you, when you get out there on the firing line and you're witnessing to somebody who's not a Christian, God does all kinds of miracles. And my history of miraculous occurrences basically center around those moments when I was reaching out to somebody who was being drawn by the Lord.

And God did miraculous things. Whether it's getting somebody a job through a prayer, or whatever it would be, or actually a physical healing in somebody's life. It's interesting, sometimes I can't get rid of a headache now as a Christian.

But I find somebody who's really sick and they're not a Christian and God pokes my heart and I say, we're going to pray for you. And if the Lord heals you, you know it's the Lord. And sure enough, God touches them and they know it's the Lord.

So much of that which lays dormant and latent within the church is ready to explode into life, but it's when we're out there on the firing line and as the Scriptures say, we bear witness of these things and so does the Holy Spirit that God has given to us. This is what Peter and John said before the Sanhedrin. Look, we're witnessing about these things, but you don't listen to us.

But it's the Holy Spirit behind us who's healing that lame man there at the temple. That's the thing that is really out there. So it becomes an exciting time when the gospel starts going out.

And we see the Lord Jesus. Now, here's my question to you. What is the gospel? We should look at that just for a minute.

Gospel means good news. Now, what is the good news? Is it the gospel of our salvation? Now, there's a phrase. Does anybody know where that is in the Bible? The gospel of your salvation.

Is that in the Bible? Or is that something we made up? That's something we Baptist preachers learned. The gospel of your salvation. Is that in the Bible? Ephesians 1. That's where it is in the Bible.

Okay, would you come up and speak the rest of the message? I knew it was in there somewhere. That's it. And Ephesians 1, verse 13.

Paul says, even after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. You see, what we've done is this. We make the gospel of salvation as if salvation messages the content of the gospel.

That's not really true. The gospel leads to salvation. When somebody hears and responds to the gospel, it leads to salvation.

And within the good news certainly is this whole matter of how we can be saved. But if we narrow it down, somehow we lose out. If we just narrow it down to... You know what the gospel is? The gospel is this.

God has a plan for your life, but you have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But God sent Jesus to die on the cross and rise again. And if you accept Jesus in your heart, you'll be saved.

That's the gospel. That narrows it down an awful lot. Now, what is the gospel? For this, we have to go back.

What was the good news that John the Baptist preached? Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. What's the good news that Jesus preached? Repent for the... Wait a minute, is that good news? Hi there, boy. Repent.

I don't see him laugh. This is not hilarious news. What is the good news? For this, we have got to go back to Palestine.

Now, Lance could take us back to Palestine. I'll have to take you up to New York and imagine we're in Palestine. Here were some religious Jews, all dry.

Religion had become politics. Religion had become legalism. And the poor and the oppressed and the Amharites, just the people, common people, were getting nowhere with this whole religious business.

And suddenly, out of that desert of religious experience came a man named John. And John said something that had been said before, but he said it in such a forceful way that it got people's attention. And what he said was this, God is still alive and He's still in control of this whole thing, and He has the kingdom.

And you know something? It's right here. It's right here. It's almost here.

I'm checking my watch and I hear the footprints and it's almost here. People say, what do we do? I mean, all this time we've been fiddling around. We've been tithing mint and cumin and doing a lot of stuff.

You say there's a big kingdom out there? John says, yes, sir. And that kingdom has a God who is just and righteous and loving and powerful. And He comes among people and He brings you equality.

Now, aren't you poor people for trodden down by the rich? Isn't there inequality in this world? Isn't there suffering and disease? When God's kingdom comes, and it's right, He's going to straighten all that out. That was good news to those people. And John went everywhere preaching this three-pronged sermon.

Now, here it was. The kingdom of God is right... almost here. It is here, but no, no, it's almost here.

And then he'd say, not if you repent the kingdom will come. If you repent, you'll enter the kingdom. People said, show me the water.

I want a God who's just. I've had it with these religious leaders and these hypocrites. I know that they're like that.

John would just tell them, those guys are hypocrites. Let me tell you the truth about God. He's fair and square with everybody.

People said, hooray, give me a J. I mean, they got excited. And he said, now, you need to repent if you want to enter into this kingdom. It's right here.

It's within earshot. It's within eyesight. It's just right upon us.

And John says, I'm coming out of the wilderness to tell you that. And the people got a witness to it because it was true. They knew he was like Elijah.

He woke the people up. This is good news. God's around.

We didn't think He was around. I mean, it looked like a game. We were saying God was around, but He wasn't.

We're all still sick. We're all still oppressed. We're all still, especially spiritually dead.

Now you say that spiritual life is reality. And then John, point number three, after saying, the kingdom of God is near and you've got to repent. Point number three says, hey, listen to this.

Right around the corner, the king's coming. The king of the kingdom. You know? We've got a kingdom.

A kingdom is made up of two things. The king and dons. Word of dons, the subjects.

And the king is the center of the kingdom. And when the king comes, John said, he is going to establish this justice and this righteousness and this love and this power. You watch this king move.

And you know something? He's right around you. He's in your midst, John says. You don't even know him.

But he's walking right now in Palestine. Wow! And people got so excited. Really.

So, we've got to be baptized. We've got to start looking for him. Then, of course, the day John the Baptist says, behold the Lamb of God.

Some of his disciples really got excited. And then Jesus came along and began to preach this same kingdom. And boy, it was good news.

Jesus got up there. You know, he spoke that so-called Sermon on the Mount. And he started telling people what reality was.

Every word that dropped out of his mouth, people said, I knew that was true. I knew it was true. God's still alive.

He cares for the poor in spirit. He cares for the humble and the broken-hearted. And He demands honesty and justice.

And I knew He wants me to be faithful in my marriage. And I knew He demands an inner heartfelt love for Him. And not just external stuff.

I knew everything Jesus was saying. I said, amen, amen, amen, amen. He spoke the kingdom.

And the kingdom was like, it burst open upon the people. And Jesus was right there. And wouldn't you know, I mean, this is why it's so exciting.

Jesus not only spoke the kingdom, but He was God's big hors d'oeuvre right there in the midst. And it's like Jesus said, here, have a little bit. Want to taste a little bit of kingdom? Just come within six feet of Jesus and you're tasting kingdom.

Suddenly you taste love. Suddenly little kids feel blessed. Suddenly sick people get healed.

Suddenly the oppressed feel like they have a chance. Suddenly women feel like they're equal. Oh, what a great move.

Every time Jesus went somewhere, He'd stop a march to turn around and see who the woman was that touched Him. Not out of condescension, but out of genuine love and appreciation for that faith. I mean, everything Jesus did, it's like He had a radius around Him, a kingdom-like.

You just got within earshot and you were going to get truth. And you were going to get love. And you'd stay out seven feet away, you know, just out of the earshot, but you're still here and you get drawn in.

And He'd be in hors d'oeuvre, enticing people with parables. He'd say, kingdom of God is like treasure hidden in a field. Somebody found it, they sold everything they had.

Some of the people, when they heard parables like this, they'd say, that's the dumbest story I ever heard. People without spiritual perception. But those who were hungry in the dry, dry land said, this man is telling us stuff we haven't heard for years.

When was the last time you thought that God was good news? The kingdom was good news, the only problem is, I know my own injustice. I know my own sinfulness. It makes me stay away from this thing.

And so Jesus said, you've got to repent to that. I say to you, woman, go and sin no more. And everywhere Jesus walked, you saw the kingdom in microcosm.

I mean, aren't the gospels beautiful? You see Jesus, there's so many appellations of Him. You know what He's called in Luke 4.18? The gospel preacher. That's the day He stood up in the synagogue of Nazareth.

He opened the scroll, Isaiah 61, and He says, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. And the poor just sat on their hands so they wouldn't applaud. What a great day! They heal the brokenhearted, they give recovery of sight to the blind.

People say, oh man, if this were only true, and then He did it. Man, that's gospel. That's good news.

Tremendous impact in Jesus' life. Jesus, the gospel preacher. When we see Him in Matthew 9, the Scriptures say, and Jesus, even as He was healing multitudes and teaching multitudes, it says He looked out over the multitudes and He had compassion for them.

A rush of tears came to His eyes because they looked like sheep without a shepherd. And it was then that He said, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send workers out into the harvest.

That's the context of evangelism. A shepherding look that looks out on broken people. In Luke 19, you know the story after Zacchaeus.

Old Zach gets saved, and then Jesus says, He has come to seek and save that which is lost. He was known as the friend of sinners. Terrible, scandalous Jesus.

He actually got next to sinners and brought them to the truth in such a way that they could walk in salvation. A friend of sinners. The seeker of the lost.

You know, when we read these kind of things and we hear these appellations of Jesus, we shouldn't just look back and say, oh boy, isn't that wonderful about Jesus? I would rather that we not only look at Jesus and glory in His compassion and glory in His being a seeker of sinners, but that we begin to sense that same heart within ourselves. Now, when's that heart going to beat within us? When do we look over the

multitude in Richmond and say, look at these poor people. Sheep without a shepherd.

We're more likely, of course naturally we will, look at them and say, what a bunch of goats. They ought to fall off the cliff in the James River. You know, because we don't see with Jesus' eyes, do we? Maybe we're not ready for the Gospels.

Maybe they're too deep for us. Because when we really purview these Gospels, they ought to bring us to the place where we see this living Jesus walking in our hearts and walking in our lives. And once again, making us these people who are even willing to befriend the sinner in order to bring them to the Kingdom.

It's this kind of Gospel that has its relevance in the church today. And you know, I tell you, in the midst of this, quote, secular world that has no need for God, there is still something that has the thunderous affirmation of spiritual forces in heaven when somebody stands up and preaches the Gospel in the midst of this secular world and says, God is still King over this world. He is Lord over your circumstances.

He's brought you to this place. You'd be surprised how many utterly worldly people say, I know it's true. But when we preach salvation only as some sort of practical antidote for our problems, it's no wonder it seems so weak at times.

This Gospel that was preached of the Kingdom was not practical. It was essentially spiritual. And yet, its practical outworkings were revolutionary every time it truly touched the earth.

Whenever somebody was really taken with the Kingdom, they became just people, loving people, and began in some measure to manifest the life of the Kingdom. And so for us, it isn't just to be practical people to say, hey, listen, you need to be saved in order to succeed in your business. I don't really like that too much.

I like the Gospel that says, God is a King and He's got a business. He's raising up sons. And He already exalted His number one Son, Jesus, into the heavens and made Him the King over all things.

And now He's building a Kingdom and it is here, right here. But you and I need to stop in our tracks and turn and receive this Jesus as Lord and enter the Kingdom ourselves. I believe the Lord attests to a Gospel like that.

So, here we are. The Gospel is kind of exciting. You know, it's amazing to me when we talk about the Gospel of John just to look at another little picture of Jesus.

When we look at the Gospel of John and we ask about the I Am's. You know, in the Gospel of John there's different passages where Jesus says, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the Bread from Heaven.

I am the Light of the World. And people can kick those things off pretty good. Do you ever notice? They kick them off pretty good.

I'm the Good Shepherd. There's one I Am that people seldom come up with. They usually get stuck.

And the one they get stuck with is this. I am the Door. And I believe that's an evangelistic revelation.

I am the Door. Jesus said that in John chapter 10 along with I am the Good Shepherd. And He means that only through Him can we come to the Father and can we come to life and can we come to the Kingdom.

But there's also another side of this I am the Door which when seen helps us understand that Jesus is the very One who enables us to go out, reach somebody and bring them in. He's the Door for us as well. He's the Door of enablement.

We say, how can that person ever come to the Lord? We see Jesus is the Door and they can come to the Lord. Now, I'm just saying there's so much to see about Jesus in the Gospels. It's what makes the Gospels so exciting.

Now, do you know in the book of Acts what it says that the Christians in the book of Acts what they preached as the Gospel? It says they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ. Now, a little something was added to the message. The whole meat was added to the message.

Let's look at those two scriptures, at least two here, in Acts chapter 8 verse 12. Just passing references here. In Acts chapter 8 verse 12, Philip is preaching and it just says in summary, but when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

There we are. That's the roughly, summarily the content of what was preached. The Kingdom of God.

They still preach that thing of the Kingdom. And Jesus Christ. Because now, of course, the church had the King.

The King had been manifest. And now they began to preach about Jesus as the King and the entrance into the Kingdom of God. Also, the very last verse in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 28, Paul is preaching now in Rome and it says, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness unhindered.

And there we are. The Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now they go hand in hand.

Now what a message that is for us. We need to sharpen our swords to be able to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ. That is to be our message.

The unique thing about it is that Jesus is both the evangelist and the evangelist. He is the good news and He is the good newser. When we get serious about gospeling, the Lord Jesus, the great evangelist, shows up.

Witnesses to Himself through the Holy Spirit as soon as we begin to preach the gospel. And so, when we watch Jesus in the gospels, we see both the message of our gospel, we see the messenger of the gospel, and we see the message. Now I want to share with you some insights into the method of evangelism.

You ready for a method? Okay, well you've probably been to one method school or another, so here goes a method of the gospel. The method of the gospel, as I see it anyway, is to watch the Lord Jesus of the gospels. To watch Him and to see how He moved among men.

Not only to be inspired by that, but to allow the Lord Jesus to begin to move in us in the same way. You know, the gospels show us the principles, anyway, of evangelism. It's worth looking at, at least just an overview.

Isn't it an amazing thing when you look in the different gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, how sort of different the angle is of the gospel? And yet it's a method for us, in a rough kind of way. You'll see what I mean. Take the gospel of Mark.

In the gospel of Mark, you see Jesus as the servant. He goes through Palestine on a course that is proclaimed by the usual conjunction in the gospel of Mark. Or immediately, immediately, if you have the New American Standard.

Immediately He went there. Immediately He did this. Immediately He healed Peter's mother.

And then immediately He went to the synagogue. In the gospel of Mark, we see Jesus as a servant with authority and power, with the beauty of a life, with love that's expressed in tangible ways. And this should inspire us as we look at the Lord Jesus in such a way that it becomes, in a sense, an understanding of how we evangelize.

Part of our evangelizing needs to be servanthood. We need to have this power, this authority, and be doing in the Kingdom of God. We need to manifest the Kingdom of God in our lives.

Out there in the world. Just look at the story, if you would, for a moment. There is the King, Jesus.

He lives in the Kingdom of God, up in the heavens, as it were. How far did He have to come from His central position in the center of the Kingdom upon the throne? How far did He have to come to get out to the edge of humanity and begin to touch lives? That was a long walk. And brothers and sisters, here's where we get into rationalitis, intellectualitis, excusitis.

But it makes no difference what anybody says. The Lord Jesus says, Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father that's in heaven. And part of the gospel methodology is a life of good works and a life of servanthood.

When we come to the place where we just hold on to our ruling and reigning aspect and let go of our servanthood, then we no longer have time for the riffraff of the world. We're too busy treading the upper stratosphere. Well, you know, we need to hold on to both.

I mean, we are a kingdom of priests, but we're also to be servants too. One of the toughest things for us is for Christians to be servants. Now, let's just admit it.

It's tough to get our hands dirty again once they've been cleaned by the Lord Jesus. Be willing to go out there and listen to somebody cursing all the time and carrying on conversations you don't like and so into themselves and selfish. And you've got to put up with that for hours in order to witness to somebody.

You say, oh, spare me, Lord. Let me dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Well, I'm sure that the Lord Jesus would have rather spent the rest of His eternity fellowshiping with the Father than ever come down for riffraff like us.

Something about Him was just willing to be a servant. That's it. He who would be greatest is going to be a servant.

And I mean, Mark stands as a methodology of evangelism for us if you see Jesus, the servant. But when we see the Gospel of Matthew, at least this is how I see it. Excuse me, I'm just reading the Gospels.

I don't have any literature telling me about this, but I'm just excited because when you look in the Gospel of Matthew, you see Jesus in quite another way. You know, somebody said that the Gospel of Matthew is somewhat similar to the Old Testament, Pentateuch, in the sense that Matthew 5-7, the so-called Sermon on the Mount, is like the sermon that was given when Moses came down from Mount Sinai. You know, he

gave the Ten Commandments and gave the Law of God.

Moses came down with God upon his face from the very presence of God and came down and said, This is our Lord, your God, and He's a very jealous God and here's what shall be. And the people said, Yes, sir. Well, in the same way that the Gospel of Matthew shows Jesus coming on the scene and not only performing those same actions that you see in the Gospel of Mark, but if you notice, Matthew has much increased chapters and verses and most of that is teachings that are authoritative.

He came as sort of, I might put it this way, the new Moses and He spoke the truth about the Kingdom of God. Whether you read chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount, or chapter 13, where He gives those parables of the Kingdom, or chapter 24, you know, about the end times and whatever. These passages of the Kingdom, Jesus spoke as the authoritative person who just came from the throne of God and came out with a hot and living message.

He spoke it to the people with authority in reality. And there is a methodology. It's when we see Jesus as the authoritative prophet who speaks forth the Word of God.

Now, we need to stop being chicken. What this means, let me give you some practical terms. Let me get off Matthew and Mark just a second.

Get over here, practical time. Get over here, Mr. Rogers neighborhood time. Gospeling is show and tell.

We got a lot of show. Well, I think I'll show my family my lifestyle for 50 years and then I'll tell them what's happened to me. But if you look at the Gospel of Matthew, you see that the Gospel involved a forth telling of the truth about God in such a way that it liberates people.

And Jesus spoke with such authority. It's especially to me emphasized in the Gospel of Matthew where there in chapter 21 and 22, Jesus is confronted by His various antagonists. And one by one, He shoots them down with such irrefutable authority that they walk away with their tail between their legs and don't dare ask Him anything more.

Shoots down the Sadducees, shoots down the Scribes, shoots down the Pharisees with wisdom from Heaven. You can't fool me. You neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God, He says, as a man who just came from the throne of Heaven.

And Gospeling involves that kind of authority and that kind of prophetic utterance and that kind of speaking that the world needs to hear today. Not practical machinations and all kinds of devices to bring people to salvation, emotionally twisting their arm or somehow trying to out-argue them intellectually. There's a forth telling of God which those who are destined for salvation will hear and respond to.

You know, there's a... Let's go back to the book of Acts here. I was just reading today. This is totally off the subject, but Acts chapter 13.

I just like this. Acts chapter 13, verse 48. You know, Paul and Barnabas are out on their missionary journey.

When he gets kicked out of the synagogue and he begins to preach to the Gentiles, there's a tremendous response and people come to the Lord Jesus. And it says in verse 48, Acts 13, When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord and as many as had been appointed to

eternal life believed. Isn't that wonderful? As many as had been appointed.

I like that. You know, we're not trying to twist people's arms who don't care anything about the Lord, who have no spiritual perception, who would rather walk in darkness than walk in the glorious light of the Lord Jesus. But until we forth tell the gospel, it's hard to know the light from the dark, those who love the light and those who love the dark.

But when the kingdom is truly proclaimed, suddenly there are some folks who live in darkness who begin to walk directly toward the light. A couple of weeks ago in a Bible study up in Huntington, the sisters get together for a Bible study and everything. There was a lady, a nurse, a school nurse who was in our fellowship and knew another school nurse and invited her to one of these Bible studies.

This nurse in our little meeting testified this is the first person who ever said yes to her about coming to a meeting. I mean, she's been asking people to come to meetings and gospel meetings for years. This is the first person who ever said yes and came.

And this woman came out of the blue and into this Bible study and the sister who was sharing that particular morning began to share on how the Lord knows our needs and this woman broke down and began to cry and got so soundly saved in that meeting that the women still can't get over it. But all this sister had done was just share about how that Jesus is such a Lord that He knows all about us. It just completely unglued this worldly woman.

And she was soundly saved right there in that meeting. I mean, isn't that great? Those who are appointed, just give them a shot. Now, it's not always like that.

Do you know what I'm saying? It's not always like somebody just hears one time and gets sick. I don't know about you. It took me ten months of hearing the gospel every week before I got sick.

You know, I got married to a southern girl. It was one of the best things I ever did. And I moved down to North Carolina and I would go to their Baptist church down there and they had a preacher there who preached every day.

He looked just at me. I mean, it was a very small meeting. Everybody knew who was saved and who wasn't.

So, you know, they'd say, now let's pray for the lost. They'd all look up at me. Yeah, I knew.

I held out for a good period of time there. I had a lot of arguments, a lot of excuses, but the Lord kept working on me and kept working on me. And I'm so glad that God's people were faithful.

They didn't just chuck me out as a group. Well, anyway. So the Lord is faithful and He wants to touch our lives.

And when we look in the different Gospels, we see Jesus in many different ways. You know, when I look in the Gospel of Luke, I see the Lord Jesus in a certain way. And I found Him doing this in my life at times.

Jesus in the Gospel of Luke appears to me to be God's man who knows men perfectly. He knew what was inside people. You know, of course, Dr. Luke gave us that peculiar insight that He gave details about the women that went around with Him.

He gave details about the people that He encountered. And Jesus so obviously was so perceptive. You know, it's like Jesus looked right down through a person's eyes, right down into their hearts, and He knew all about them.

Now we see that in all the Gospels, but I like it in the Gospel of Luke because it's so human. Jesus is a human being. Go on to Zacchaeus and say, Zacchaeus, come on down.

How did He know? How did He know Zach was just so hungry? He just looks at people and He knows. It's an amazing thing. And you know, I'm sorry, it's a methodology.

Jesus is the great discerner of men. Have you ever been in a situation where God just gave you a knowing about somebody's life and you just begin to share with Him? I had somebody just a short while ago and I began to talk to this man who was actually beating his wife. And he was up in arms and furious and ready to kill.

You know, the woman had been saved and come to our fellowship. And he was just, oh, well, anyway. I mean, that's not the reason he beat her.

That's a whole other story. And this man began to talk and foul mouth and carry on. You know, he's a big top executive for Chase Manhattan and he's going on about this and that and the other thing.

And I just stopped him cold in his tracks. I mean, just like I shot him with a deer rifle. I just told him about what was in his heart.

And I told him the truth. And I told him where he was full of baloney. And it stopped him dead just like that.

He said, how did you know that? And then I began to share with him about Jesus. And he did not accept the Lord. But he stopped right dead there and listened for 45 minutes while I told him the truth.

And he knew it was true. Now, Jesus knows into people. He knows people's hearts.

And if we know that Lord Jesus and let Him stir in our lives, we come upon people who outwardly look like the woman at the well. And inwardly, their hearts are hungry, but you've got to get through the veneer. And only the eyes of Jesus can see down in there.

But boy, once you see in there and you call somebody, it stuns them. I remember this sister. Oh, she was so nervous.

We go out to the shopping center sometimes, you know, and I strum the guitar and we hand out tracks and witness. And this woman was so nervous, but she went. And she was handing out tracks over here and there's a liquor store there and people coming in and out.

And this man's walking toward the liquor store and hands him a track. He says, I don't want this track. The lady says, but maybe you need it.

He says, I don't need this kind of stuff. And you know, just like this, something came into this sister's heart. And she said, kind of out of obedience or a hunch, maybe you don't need this, but your family does.

The guy stopped dead. What do you mean by that? She said, well, I mean maybe your family needs to know this Jesus. Well, the guy mellowed out and began to listen.

This sister shared the Gospel with her and a few others joined with them and they shared together for about ten minutes and next thing you know, I'm playing my guitar and I look over there to my left. They're on their knees on the sidewalk in front of that liquor store and this guy's crying and asking Jesus to come in his life. And afterwards, I went up and asked her the story.

She said, well, I don't know what happened, but I just said, maybe your family... Well, it turns out he was in the process of getting a divorce and his family, he was so depressed about it, he was going in there to get drunk, you know, going into the liquor store and got stopped right there by the Lord Jesus. I'll tell you what, Jesus, when you look in the Gospel of Luke, He knows men. He wants to spot them and stop them before they go through the barricade and over the cliff.

We need to see this, Jesus. Or you look in the Gospel of John. Now, in the Gospel of Mark, you see the servant just straightway here, straightway there, doing good work there.

In the Gospel of John, what do you see? You see the power... I mean, to me, I'll just tell you my limited thing. I see the power of being. Jesus in His divine I Am is so powerful, so winsome.

I mean, those guards came into the garden and said, where is this Jesus? And He says, I am. They all fall backwards like dominoes. Jesus was just so powerful in who He was.

And you know, it's just being who we are in Christ. It's such a powerful witness. You don't have to show anything.

But you see, you've got Mark too. You've got to be a servant to do good work. But then you've got this side of John with Jesus standing there with an all-knowing sense about Him.

Going through various episodes of His life always at rest. Working yet not working. Just simply doing the things He sees His Father doing.

You see that whole divine side about Jesus and you realize, in a sense, that some of the most effective witnessing we do is when we really are who we are in Christ. And when we really are filled with the Lord Jesus. I don't know, I suppose this happens probably to everybody in this room.

But sometimes people just look at you and say, wait a minute, there's something different about you. They can just spot you in the crowd. You know, sometimes maybe I miss it.

But I almost, it seems like I can almost always spot a Christian like in an airport or something. You know, sometimes I'll fly to a place like India and I don't even know who I'm supposed to meet. And I'll walk out through the gate and there's a whole bunch of people, you know, in India.

There's like 900 people all over the place. And I come out there, you know, looking like Goliath compared to them. And I look.

And I look through this whole sea of faces. And I look over there and see a brother. And I just know that's the guy.

He says, brother come, brother come. And I can't understand him, but I know that must be me. Sure enough.

Isn't that amazing? How you can almost see in people's eyes the being of Jesus. You know, sit in a restaurant, the menu comes, you look up at the waitress and you can just tell. She hasn't even done anything yet.

I can just tell. She's a sister. Well, I'm not right all the time, but it's amazing how sometimes we can just sense the being of God in the lives of people.

And this is the gospel. The gospel is allowing Jesus to be in our lives. But being involves servanthood.

And being involves compassion of a man who knows men. And being involves prophetic utterance. But then it just involves being.

The whole thing wrapped up. It's beautiful. Can we just take it one back, peel it one layer back? When we look at the gospels, we not only see Jesus in these aspects, and therefore we see in, if I want to put it this way, a methodology of the gospel.

But when you take one step back and see the gospel writers and how they wrote their gospels, you also see, as it were, a methodology. Can I suggest? A methodology for the gospel. What do you think Mark was trying to convey when he gave us his gospel? The Lord Jesus.

But what did he want to convey about the Lord Jesus? Well, this is my impression. When I read the gospel of Mark, I get this impression. All you need to do to share the gospel is let the facts speak for themselves.

That's what Mark says to me. You know, Mark's gospel did a roll like that. Fact after fact, event after event, Jesus' life just standing there, pure, straight.

This is it. I mean, you know Mark got this from Peter. Obviously, this is the way Peter must have preached.

This is it. This is the way Jesus was. Take it or leave it.

I'll tell you what he was like. He was righteous. He was just.

He was powerful. He was loving. He went here and did this.

He went there and did that. And just the power of Jesus' life, standing alone, just standing right there without interpretation, without anything more to it, just the life of Jesus in itself, is all the power, all the beauty, all the content that you need to bring somebody to the Lord. Now, there's a methodology.

And there's sometimes where the Lord leads us in moments of gosselling when the Lord says the facts alone are enough. I will always remember for the rest of my life my only visit to South Korea. I went there some ten years ago and I went there and was part of a gospel team.

And it was my first experience going somewhere where I had to have a translator. And this throws you off, you know. And so we would go out and actually out in front of a church which was right in the middle of town in the city of Pusan, South Korea.

Every day at lunchtime we would preach the gospel. Now, I remember my first day out there. I will always remember this.

It's so wonderful how sometimes just the life of Jesus speaks for itself. And I would stand out there and this church had a nice church building inside but most of the folks had never been inside. So I said, let's

just go outside.

Out on their steps. Oh, we've never done that before. I said, well, we're going to try it now.

So they said, okay, we did it. And so we had this microphone and I would say, hello, my name is Dana Congdon and this interpreter was really fired up and he'd be preaching Jesus while I was introducing myself. He didn't want to waste any time.

But I told the gospel story because of interpretation, because it was lunchtime and there wasn't much time, I gave maybe a six minute message. And I talked about how Jesus walked on this earth with love and with purity, with honesty, and with eyes that were clear. He translated.

And I talked about how people couldn't stand that kind of righteousness. And that kind of love. And they put Him to death.

And when I said that, for many of these Koreans, it's the first time they'd ever heard that. I saw heads literally drop with this gospel story. And tears come to people's eyes.

And I just mentioned how cruelly He was killed. If anybody didn't deserve to be killed, it was Him. And He was killed and we killed Him because we're the same way.

And then I said, that after three days, Jesus rose from the dead and faces looked up like this. Just the impact of the gospel for the first time on somebody's heart. Now, you know all of us down this way, we're gospel hard and we've heard the gospel so many times.

You twist your dial, you hear the gospel. These folks heard it for the first time and the pristine beauty of the life of Jesus itself was all it took to seriously convict these people. And then we'd ask inquirers to come to the back.

And then it'd be 15, 20, 25 young men, 30, 35 years old coming back there every time we preached the gospel. Just impacted by the life of Jesus itself. That's what the gospel of Mark shows us by way of methodology.

When I look at the gospel of Matthew, I see Matthew sort of taking a step back and says, yes, the beauty of Jesus' life is there. But you know, let's take just one step back and see something. Jesus' life is filled with providence, is filled with fulfillment.

He's in a long line of continuity that started way back there with Abraham and moved right through. And you know, Matthew told this story and wrapped the story of Jesus in the providential moving of God, in the history of God's salvation. You know, everything that Jesus did in the gospel of Matthew says, and this was to fulfill a prophecy.

You ever notice that? And everything about the life of Jesus had some kind of prophecy that was made beforehand about it. Everything was providentially arranged. And He went down to Egypt as a child and He came back and this and that happened.

And it was seen to be in a great stream of God's purpose. The actions, yes, but in a big stream of God's purpose in the kingdom. Everything was wrapped up in God's plan.

And by presenting the gospel in this way, Matthew, in a sense, grabbed the people who sensed this sort of destiny. You know, I remember an event one day. We went to a university in New York and I went with a brother who is a completed Jew.

You know, a Jew who accepted Jesus as his Savior. And he just preached the straight old gospel. We went to this one university which is purportedly 80% Jewish.

We went into the student union building with permission to speak the gospel. And this brother got up there on the microphone and I introduced the guy and he got up on the microphone. And he started talking to these Jewish students.

Now, this was back 1972. This was back hippie days, the whole thing. Whatever you want to do, flower children, peace, peace, brother, you know, all this kind of stuff.

This guy spoke and within five minutes there was such an uproar and a gnashing of teeth that we couldn't even go on. And you know all this brother said? He says, you young Jewish brothers, men and women, who sit here and say you don't even believe in God and you take drugs. He says, I want to tell you the truth.

He says, the covenant is still in your heart and you're under obligation to God and you know you belong to God and God's providential hand is on you and the only way you'll come into the kingdom of God is through Jesus, who is the Hamashiach. And he began to get infuriated because they knew the covenant was upon them. They knew God had them in their hands.

Even though they didn't believe in God, they still knew this. You know what I'm saying? There's a knowing that's deeper than the intellect. And it infuriated them because this man caught them right where they were.

They knew they were under obligation to the Torah. And he hit them right there. And the Gospel of Matthew hits people right there.

You know, I remember talking to this one girl who said she didn't believe in God. She didn't believe in everything. And I said, you know, I believe God.

Contrary to what you're saying, I believe God's been working on you for a long time. She said, yeah, I know He has. How do you deal with that, you know? It's just, can I say, the methodology of Matthew when he writes the Gospel.

Look, show that this event of Jesus, He just wasn't some kind of isolated Savior. He came down in the providence of God to take people providentially and bring them into the kingdom. It's all fulfilled.

It all has a continuity to it. It all has to do with David and the kingdom and the Jews and now the fulfillment in the kingdom of the heavens. That's exciting stuff.

You look at the Gospel of Luke. And Luke says, Theophilus, look, I'm writing to you. I want you to understand the things that Jesus did.

Also shared the actions and the words of Jesus. But Luke says, can I just share with you a couple of little tidbits? I'd like to not only share the words and the actions of Jesus, but I'd like to share just a little bit behind the scenes as to the spiritual dynamite that went on behind the scenes. And of course, it's the

wonderful Gospel of Luke where we have all the passages where it mentions Jesus praying.

And it's the Gospel of Luke that has the many references to the Holy Spirit and then spills over into the Book of Acts. What's Luke saying? He's saying, Look at the life of Jesus and now let me tell you something about this man. When you look behind the scenes, you see a man of prayer.

You know when the Holy Spirit fell down on him? You heard that story at the baptism? Luke would say. Let me tell you what really happened. Jesus came up out of the water and He was praying when the Spirit fell down.

Did you know that? And you know the story you heard about how Jesus appointed 12 apostles? Let me tell you the inside story. He stayed up all night the night before and prayed about it. You know the story about how Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ there at Caesarea Philippi? Let me tell you.

It says, Jesus went up and prayed and then He said, Who do men say that I am? You know the story about the transfiguration? You've all heard about how Jesus was changed into a glorious presence? Do you know what it says about Him? It says He went up to the mountain to pray. And in that context, things happened. Do you know when Jesus had great success among the multitudes and people wanted to make Him a king and they were following Him everywhere? Do you know what it said? Jesus responding to their acceptance went up alone into the mountains to pray.

The Gospel of Luke has Jesus praying up there in the temptation wilderness. It has Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's behind the scenes.

Do you understand the spiritual dynamite of a person? How can a man be like this Jesus? There's prayer behind it. And then there's the Holy Spirit. I mean, when you look at the Gospel of Luke, it starts out with the bulletin having to do with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit coming down at the baptism. Jesus goes up into the temptation in the fullness of the Spirit and comes out and the power of the Holy Spirit stands up and His first message is I'm anointed by the Spirit and when the disciples come back and report what's happened, He rejoiced in the Spirit and then after His resurrection He speaks to the disciples and says, Wait now for the Holy Spirit. Now, what other Scripture says that? Luke captures that behind the scenes dynamic.

Wait till you get clothed with the Spirit. And then you go, Theophilus, I've got to write you another book because there's more. And he starts to write out in the book of Acts and now the Spirit came down, they became witnesses, they moved.

That's behind the scenes. You know, there's some people who look at Christians and they say, You know, I know there's something different but what's behind the scenes? And part of the Gospel that we need to share with them is the spiritual dynamic behind there. They say, I mean, imagine them saying to us, I mean, it's a joke for us but for people in the world it's serious.

I could never be holy like you, they say. I mean, you're faithful. I mean, you read your Bible.

You don't smoke. I could never be so holy like you. And then many Christians say, Well, you're right.

Oh, but no, no, no, no, no. Oh, how people need to hear this. Do you understand the good news of hearing this? Listen, I want to tell you the truth about me.

I'm just a human being. I don't have strength in myself. But I want to tell you, when Jesus came into my life, He began to change what I wanted.

And I found that He made me conscious of Him in such a way that I started praying more. It's not like I beefed myself up. And the reason I helped that person over there is not because I really wanted to.

I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me to. And so I tried to obey God and He gave me the grace to do it. You know, if people could just hear that, if the world could believe that a power of God could come in and reorder their life, that would be good news for them.

Most of them really feel hopeless about this whole religious business. How could I possibly be religious and climb the corporate scale? It seems impossible to most men. Unless they understand that there's dynamite behind the scenes.

Nobody's expecting them to do what only God can do. I think this all has to do with something from the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. Well, what can you say about the Gospel of John? Think about John writing his Gospel.

What is he doing? I think, and put it simply for me, John got captured by the Incarnation. You see, he met Jesus one day and saw just a man. And he took another look and he saw a rabbi.

And he took another look and he saw the greatest rabbi he ever knew. He took another look and he saw a miraculous, miracle-working rabbi. And he started looking behind the scenes and stayed close to Jesus and he started to see divinity.

It so captured him. He says, we beheld His glory. The Word becoming flesh.

I kept looking, I kept looking, and it did something to me. Look at Jesus, John is saying, and then look behind the scenes. Do you want to see what Jesus is really like? And then John takes all kinds of events in Jesus' life and he says, you know, Jesus did many things, but there's a reason behind everything.

There's meaning behind everything. John became a seeker looking behind everything. You know, when we went to the wedding.

Peter says, what wedding? John says, you know, the one at Canaan where He changed the water to wine. Oh yeah, Peter says, great miracle. John says, no, no, but there's a sign behind that.

Peter says, hmm, never thought of that. I just thought we needed wine. John says, no, no, no, no, don't you see, Jesus changes the ordinary things of life into that which is completely different and new and transformed.

Peter says, oh yeah. And so John looked behind miracles that were performed and saw spiritual significance. So he didn't call them miracles.

What did he call them? Signs. All life has meaning behind it, John says. You know, there are people in this existential world who are just kind of aping their way through life, but they don't sense any meaning.

And I could suggest a methodology when you look at John as he writes his Gospel is this. If you and I can share a testimony that Jesus put meaning behind marriage, behind vocation, behind having children, if people could see there's meaning to these things. These things seem meaningless now.

But there's meaning behind morality and righteousness. There's meaning behind truth. You see, all right.

Now you see, I've just gone through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John twice. Half of you have fallen asleep. Can I just draw a conclusion from this whole thing? There is a methodology to evangelism.

And you know what it is? You've got to know Jesus. You've got to read the Gospels and see Him walking and then find yourself filled with the Spirit of Jesus and you'll find yourself doing some of these same things. The methodology is there is no methodology.

I mean, there just is no do this, do that and do that and come back one more time. Then if they don't accept the Lord, leave them alone. Oh no.

It's a much more spontaneous thing than that. But it isn't just a disorganized haphazard I'll do it if I think the Lord's leading me kind of thing. That sometimes is a put off.

I'm saying that when Jesus of the Gospels really gets a hold of us, He begins to change us and reopens our life to a compassion for ugly looking people. He reopens our life to reexamine the meaning of life. You know, things we take for granted.

I mean, frankly, brothers and sisters, we have known the Lord in such a way that we take so much for granted. We've forgotten the initial... I can't tell you... I don't know about you. Now, I was saved when I was 20 years old and I can remember so distinctly the tremendous sense of gladness I had that He had forgiven my sins.

It's something I just have to honestly say so often I just take for granted now. I didn't take it for granted on the day of my salvation. And yet, I don't think of that often enough because here's somebody weighed down with sin and I don't realize that dynamic in their life and I don't share the Gospel with them.

That there's relief and forgiveness of sins. We get so far away from the Jesus of the Gospels and I think we need to revisit Him because He's still the great evangelist with all the other names that Jesus is. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords and the Great I Am and all the names that He's now called in Heaven and given a name above every other name.

He's still the manifestation of God's heart and His love for the world. And we're only going to see that through Jesus. We have got to come to the place where we stop being smug and make excuses.

We realize that there's a Jesus who really cares about people. I remember how this came home to me once a few years ago. I was in a meeting and we were worshipping and I only say this because it meant something to me at the time.

I don't believe this is anything other than just something for me. We were around the Lord's table and we were worshipping and on this particular Sunday I was sitting in such a way that there's a large picture window in this particular meeting hall and as we were around and we were praying and singing, the prayers and the singing really wasn't doing much that day. Folks were struggling.

There was some reality there but there could have been a lot more. And I'm sitting right across from this window and through this large picture window I see multitudes of people driving back and forth, walking back and forth, people with boats on the back of their cars, and people going back and forth. And something just kind of flashed in me and it was something along this line.

Jesus was in our meeting, in our midst, receiving our praises and our worships. But I felt like maybe Jesus, with one eye, was looking out that window. And all those folks on Sunday whose lives were so purposeless that all they were doing is running out there to put their boat down and to take another ride.

Then when their boat gets old you'll see them zooming by with their golf clubs on Sunday morning. And it just all means nothing to them. I'm not trying to diminutize worship or our gathering together in the sincerity of the worship of the saints.

But I think sometimes there's a balance in the heart of God. I can't speak for Him but I feel like sometimes He says, don't you care for all those folks who are here today? I think that the gospel, this kingdom gospel, is something that's so profound and so deep and so rich that we have to ask the Lord Jesus to lead us through. And I think frankly that it's something that is so significant that you can't say the gospel is for lost people.

The gospel is for everybody. And I noticed just on Tuesday nights as an example, this is the 100th time in various different ways this has come home to me. We set this meeting up.

We are advertising in secular newspapers. We're trying to bring in lost people. And lost people are coming.

But God is bringing in a lot of lame Christians. And I figure it's what He wants. So who am I to say, look, lame Christians, go on home.

I'm supposed to speak to people who are lost. All over Long Island there's these folks roaming around who accepted Jesus somewhere at a young life meeting or something. And ever since that day they don't have a church home.

They have no foundation. They're living in sin with somebody else. They're not married to them.

And they're going through all kinds of things or they're doing drugs or they have a problem or they're homosexual. And they're calling themselves Christians. I got a note.

You know, every Tuesday night we have people write responses. And I had somebody write, I'm a lesbian and would like to know what you think about Christian homosexuals. I'm a Christian and a lesbian and would like to know what you think about homosexuality.

That's what they said. I just thought to myself, you know, wouldn't it be a shame if this person really was a Christian and they had so little foundation they didn't even know. I had people come up to me after the meeting and say, you mean you think it's possible that God doesn't want us to live together? And what do you do with somebody? Of course you're not supposed to live together, you dodos, unless you get married.

Well, we got to start with them and saying, you know, what do you think the Lord's saying to you? We pray about it, you know, and if they're sincere about it, they usually break up. But I mean, there's folks out there I can't believe. I wonder about a lot of folks who are quote, quote, born again.

I don't know. I'm not trying to say everybody's having a bogus experience. But there's a lot of folks who don't really know the Lord Jesus and being drawn toward Him.

And I would suspect that if by the precious Spirit of God, God begins to throw a net over this Richmond area, if there wouldn't be a lot of confusion as to who was in and who was out and who was in between. But the whole point is the Gospel needs to be declared. There's a Kingdom and there's a King.

And it's time for the in-gathering of those that would come. I don't know what their titles are, if they're Christian or if they're Methodist or whatever title they have. But the point is, do they know the Lord Jesus? Are they moving toward Him? And I think this should be the center of the Gospel that we preach.

Well, may the Lord help us. He's the one who's got to capture us. We're pretty slippery eels, you know, a whole bunch of us when it comes to this matter of witnessing, this matter of the Gospel.

We have all kinds of safe reasons, often near reactions to our own past. May the Lord help us be so honest that we can repent and be the servants He wants us to be. Lord, we just come to You because You're the one who defines the Gospel and You are the Gospel.

When we think about Methods, You seem to blow up every one we've ever seen concocted by man. They're all too narrow. They're all little boxes.

They all stereotype You. But Lord, if You could so presence Yourself as we read the Gospel stories, if You could come alive and enable us to see You walking through Palestine, and then shake us to the place where we see You face to face until our hearts begin to synchronize with Yours, we believe there would be effect. Lord, we don't ask that we could have Gospel campaigns and meetings just to satisfy our sense of guilt.

We ask for bigger things than that. We ask that the very sense of Your being that is called evangelist could begin to be manifest in us in godly concern and compassion for a sheep without a shepherd and for those who are lost. Lord, I pray that You would help us as Your Spirit deals with us in these days to root out all of our excuses, all our reactions from the past, and honestly just be what You want us to be.

But in honesty, not in rationalization. Help us, Lord, in these days. We want to really see You in a new way.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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