

# Evangelism 05 Personal Evangelism

by Welcome Detweiler

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*Personal evangelism is the act of sharing the gospel with individuals, one-on-one, and leading them to Christ, and every Christian has the responsibility and ability to do so.*

**Duration:** 36:52

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 3:16, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Acts 20:26, Romans 10:14, 1 Corinthians 9:16

**Topics:** "Personal Evangelism", "Salvation Ministry"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of personal evangelism and the responsibility of every Christian to lead souls to Christ. He emphasizes that anyone can be a witness for Christ and start conversations that can help others find salvation. The preacher also shares an illustration of evangelizing an island with strict rules, highlighting the need to make choices and prioritize individual souls. He concludes by inviting anyone who is not yet saved to accept Jesus as their Savior and offers to read and explain the scriptures to them. The sermon is based on the biblical passage from Ezekiel 3:16 and references John 3:16.

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## Transcript

It probably will not be necessary to mention this book I mentioned last night on the witness stand, giving the conversion stories of some of the people in our city. There may be some left, there may not be, but you can check the bookstore after the service. After I've been in a place for a few days, I like to ask myself the question, what did you notice that is different from some of the other places where you have had the privilege of preaching? And tonight, I'm prepared to tell you.

Is it good or is it bad? There are very few places that you can go today that the congregation or the auditorium is nicely filled 15 minutes before the scheduled opening of the service, and I think that's wonderful. Let's give yourselves a hand. I wish I could take you back to my city and tell the people that it could be, can be done, but I don't know how to convince some people that it is important to be on time, and a little ahead of time doesn't do a bit of harm.

A time of meditation and prayer for the speaker is wonderful, and it's nice to have you start the meeting on time, and it would be nice to stop on time, and I feel as though I have to apologize, because Sunday night that clock slips up on me, and I think I stole three minutes from you, and I'm sorry about that. I believe in stopping on time. I just heard a new story, and you've heard it.

It came out of Canada, so you Canadians can go to sleep while I tell it, regarding a preacher that went over time, and way over time, and a man said, I'm going to teach him a lesson. I'm going home, and he walked out, and the preacher said, I'm not going to let him get by with it. Where are you going? I'm going to get a haircut.

He said, why didn't you get the haircut before you came? I didn't need it when I came. In this stack of books, the lower last one, Dead Bones Live, Ezekiel, and that's what I want you to turn in your Bible. Ezekiel chapter three.

Ezekiel chapter three. You won't have any difficulty remembering where I am reading, because you know John 3.16, and I'm starting Ezekiel 3.16. And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Some of them I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor seekest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life. The same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou shalt have delivered thy soul.

There is just one verse in Acts 20, where Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders, and among some of the things he says is this, Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. Our general theme during the week has been that of evangelism, and up until this point we have devoted our attention mainly to the responsibility of the church. The universal church includes every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in every generation there is a church on earth that is responsible for all those sinners that are in the world, to bring them the wonderful message of salvation that was provided by Jesus Christ when he died on Calvary's cross as our substitute.

Also, a responsibility on the local church in every given community. That church is responsible to evangelize the people in that area. Not only in that area, but the local church has responsibility, perhaps, to send missionaries out to the dark-heathen countries, and to support missions as well.

But we have confined our message on evangelism mainly to a collective group of Christians who should have an interest in lost souls, and as a company, should be proclaiming the gospel. Last night, I brought to your attention that the aims of the local church are a place for worship, a place for prayer fellowship, a place for the teaching of the word of God to believers, the upbuilding of saints, and the evangelization of the sinners in that given area. And I pleaded for a proper balance of these goals, and I am aware of the fact that in some places there's a possibility that evangelism is out of proportion, but maybe in many places this has been neglected, and we become self-satisfied and are no longer evangelizing.

Tonight, I want to turn something to something equally important, and maybe even more important, and that is personal evangelism. I think you will find in your Bible that there are at least two categories of evangelism, and that is the individual who evangelizes, and the company of people that evangelize. When our Lord Jesus Christ was here on the earth, he said to those early disciples, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." He said that to a group of men, and it was applicable to individuals as well.

I suppose in that day their common way of fishing was by net fishing, because you will read that they were mending their nets, and they were washing their nets, and so on. But I guess today, if I were to ask a man who is a fisherman, and there are always some of those fellows hanging around, I'd say, "How do you

fish? By net or by hook?' and he will tell you one or the other. If he is net fishing, he can't do it alone.

That's a cooperative work, and that is equivalent to the church evangelizing as a company. But then there are some who are out there all alone, just a hook, and they're catching them. It doesn't make any difference whether you get them by the net or by the hook, and I think this may be an illustration of human responsibility as a collective group of Christians, plus the personal evangelism.

These two should not be in competition with each other, but the one should complement the other. They go together, because the church is made up of individuals. So, usually, I guess in most cases, if the individuals in that church are concerned about the loss, you will find that the collective effort of that church is also concerned about the loss.

I would like to suggest that, some day, I might hear of an island that has not been evangelized. I get in touch with the governor of that island, and I ask him, what do you permit in the way of some stranger coming in here and telling these people the way of salvation? He said, we have certain rules and regulations. You may come in here, you may preach the gospel to a crowd of people, you can build a chapel, and you can preach the gospel.

You can preach in the open air, any place you want to, but you can never talk to individuals about the way of salvation. Only to a crowd of people, but never on the individual basis. And I say, that's interesting.

I hear of another island that needs to be evangelized, and I get in touch with the governor of that island, and I want to find out what the rules are, and he says, the rules here are that you can never have a congregation, never speak to more than six people, never build a chapel, you may go into the home, but if we catch you speaking to more than six people at one time, you will have to leave the island. Now, I have to make a choice, and since this is just an illustration, I want you to make a choice. You've devoted your life to evangelizing that island.

Which island would you select? How do you think you could operate? And, of course, on that first island, you wouldn't be able to carry out the things that I mentioned last night, the fourfold aim of a global church, but just so far as getting souls to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, I have a suspicion that perhaps if I selected island number two, and devoted myself to a one-to-one basis preaching to individuals, I think I could probably reach more people that way, and have the blessing of God on the ministry, maybe more than the other. It's a little difficult to see that souls are saved just by preaching, because usually, even in a preaching service, there is that sinner who is awakened, but he's not quite sure what he has to do to be saved, and then he needs that personal contact of a personal worker afterward. It would be interesting if I could ask this audience tonight, how many of you never had an individual speak to you, but you heard sermons, and because of hearing sermons, you were converted? Or, on the other hand, how many of you were not converted because of a sermon you heard, but an individual who kept talking to you day after day by various means, and brought the message of salvation to you? These two are illustrated in our Bible.

Supposing we take the evangelist Philip, and there's a very interesting story about him in Acts chapter 8, where he has a citywide campaign in the city of Samaria, and it's wonderful to see the details of that, because the last verse of that says, there was great joy in that city. A happy city? Have you ever heard of a happy city? I don't know that I have. I heard a few years ago that the World Series was won by Pittsburgh, and they celebrated, and that word meant that city was happy.

But, if I asked the police force and the street cleaners whether they were happy, that city was turned upside down. When sinners celebrate, I tell you they have a poor definition of joy. There is no joy in that city.

The only thing that can bring joy to a city is when the people hear the gospel, turn to Jesus Christ, and find relief from the burden of sin. And I read at the end of that story that there was great joy in that city. Philip is becoming a rather famous evangelist, and then the Spirit of God does something strange.

Philip, there's a man who came up from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, and he bought a portion of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah, and he's on the way home. I want you to go down there to the desert, and I want you to talk to him. Lord, one person? When I've had the privilege of speaking to this whole crowd? Yes, I want you to go.

And Philip did, just for one person, proving again that God uses both of the methods. He can speak to that city and bring the message of salvation to a crowd of people, but one person. And we shall not know until we get to eternity what the results were of that one man being saved, and then going back to his country and telling others, and maybe thousands of people eventually, through that one man being converted.

God spread the gospel to a big area. If you take the Apostle Paul, who in his missionary journeys had many opportunities of speaking to crowds in cities, doing pioneer work, but you will also find that he is doing personal work. He stands before King Agrippa, he stands before Cephas, he stands before Felix, and a number of other people, individual, one-to-one, presenting the message of salvation.

And, of course, when we think of personal workers, there can be no one that will eclipse the master himself. John chapter 3. The Lord Jesus Christ, and in a dialogue with a very highly educated man, so far as the scriptures are concerned, Nicodemus, and Jesus Christ deals with that man individually. The next chapter, a different man, the woman of Samaria, entirely different.

If Nicodemus is at the top of the ladder of respectability, this woman may be on the lower rung of the ladder of respectability. And, if you want to know how to lead a soul to Christ, read those two chapters and see if you can't learn some very practical lessons in how the Lord Jesus Christ dealt with unsafe people on a one-to-one basis. The Son of God, here on earth, and he did preach many wonderful sermons, the Sermon on the Mount.

Would he take time out to bother with one individual? Yes, he did, and if he did, we should follow his example and be interested in individuals. Everyone has the privilege on the day of conversion to lead other souls to Christ. This is for every person.

Tonight I want to cover this subject of a personal evangelism by asking four questions. Who, when, where, and how? Who can lead souls to Christ? Every Christian. Every Christian, as soon as he's born again.

I have heard of just a few exceptions to that rule, and, of course, the exceptions to the rule always prove the rule. A man in our city whose wife was a Christian, and he did not claim to be a Christian, but he was operating or driving a candy truck and visiting all the little stores in the rural communities, and he had been out to hear the gospel. And, in these contacts that he made with the storekeepers at different places, he would get into a discussion on the way of salvation, and he said, that you'd be surprised how many of those people believe that you have to work your way to heaven.

And, he said, that I got into some very interesting talks with him, tried to prove to him that it's by grace and not by works. I said, Ray, if some of those people were to ask you, have you ever trusted the Savior, what would you say? Well, I'm fortunate no one has ever asked me. That man didn't claim to be a Christian, but he enjoyed arguing with people who didn't understand the way of salvation.

Now, from that, I am inclined to believe that it is even possible for an unsaved man to say something for the glory of God, but that is not the rule. Usually, it is the person who, from the heart, can say, I have tried this, I have trusted the Savior myself, I can recommend him. So that the first, I suppose, the first thing that is necessary for a person to be a good soul winner is to have a biblical conversion.

Unless you have that, you won't be able to answer very many questions, and it would be very helpful if you had the assurance of your salvation, because if you hesitate just a bit, and you cannot be bold, as was the Apostle Paul when he said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. If you don't have that boldness, then the person will detect that you're not quite sure. You must be sold on your product to be a good salesman.

You may not like the idea that I suggest that a personal evangelist is a salesman, but really he is, and a salesman that will do the job has to, first of all, be convinced that his product is the best. Let me suppose that a salesman comes to see me, and he wants to sell me some Firestone tires. He tells me all the good things about Firestone tires, and he tries to keep my back turned towards his car, but finally I'm just going up there, and I peep down there, and I see you're driving on Sears Robo tires.

You know what I would say? I'll let you know when I need some tires. This is very important, and I think that salesman would be a good salesman. He would have Firestone tires, and he'd get a spray can of that silver paint, and he'd place those letters so that you could see them a quarter of a mile away.

I want the people to know that I'm sold on my product. It may be. One of the reasons that Christians do not witness for the Lord is because they are not quite sure that it meets the need of every person.

I tried to point that out, I guess it was on Sunday morning. There is not a soul living anywhere on the face of the earth that you could meet where you have to say, my gospel does not fit that person. I don't care where he is.

This is a message for the human family, and it meets the need of every person. A knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is very helpful when you lead souls to Christ, but it is not absolutely necessary. It will help you to answer many questions that you don't have to say, my opinion is this, but this is what the Bible says.

So, that's one reason we ought to be interested in learning the scriptures, and even having at our fingertips, and being able to quote verses that deal with the way of salvation. There are a number of other things that are necessary, and that is a compassion for the lost. The person who does this work on a basis of I don't care, the person again detects this.

I think there are some people who have been burdened about reaching others for our blessed favor to the extent that, while they're trying to tell that person, there are a few tears that come out. Not crocodile tears, but just recognizing the person that is standing before me in his present condition, he has just told me about his life, is headed for hell, and I have the responsibility, and actually better than that, the privilege of telling him how his whole life can be changed, for down here, and his eternal destiny be changed. What a responsibility rests upon me when I stand before one sinner, or a congregation, possibility of sinners, and I

must declare unto them the clear and wonderful way of salvation.

The knowledge of the different religions, the cults, the variety of people that you shall meet is also helpful, but not altogether necessary. In being a good soul winner, you have to be willing at certain times to say, your question is too hard for me, I don't know the answer. We hate to do that.

We would love to be able to say, you can't ask any questions about the bible, but it is good, rather than to bluff, to admit, I don't know the answer, but I'll get it, and the next time I meet you, I'm going to have an answer to that question. All of these things are important if we want to lead souls to Christ. But one thing more, who is eligible? A person who is asking God for direction.

Unless we are led by the Spirit of God, and do it in the energy of the flesh, we shall accomplish very little. You remember the words of Acts 1, 8, Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth. Let's not forget that God gave to us the Holy Spirit to direct us, to give us the right words, to say at the right time, to help those that are inquiring about the way of salvation.

I must point out this, that there is no Christian on the face of the earth that can say, I can't win a soul to Christ. I am bashful, my mother was bashful, my grandfather was bashful, everybody in our family is bashful, so I can't, and the Lord will have to excuse me. I'm sorry, you can't get by.

There is some hint that Timothy was timid Timothy, and that's why Paul, in his letter to him, said that he didn't want him to be timid about these things, but to be a good soldier, a bold man, and you can't hide behind that. Now, of course, I will have to admit that, by nature, we are not all quite alike. I have met people who are so bold and never met a stranger in their life.

They could walk up at your telephone pole and say, my name is so-and-so, what's your name, and do it without any problem. I can't do it quite as well as some of them, and you say, well, I can't talk to anybody. That's not true, but if you feel that way, have you ever prayed about that? Just for the moment, forget everything else that you want to pray about.

Lord, am I justified in hiding behind this excuse? Can I go into eternity and say, the reason I didn't win in his soul is because I happen to be a timid person, or would it be better to say, Lord, can you do, can you perform a miracle, and change me to the extent that, instead of just shriveling when I have to face a person, the Lord will give me boldness? And I've heard people say, I didn't know I could do it. I tried it, and I found out that he gave me health, and that I could do it. Did you get the lesson? There is not one soul, a Christian, that can't be a soul winner, and you should.

I want to ask you, have you ever led a soul to Christ? Now, that's a difficult question to answer, because it's quite possible that no one has ever led a one, a 100% led a soul to Christ. Nearly everyone that is saved, when he gives his testimony, he says, there was a certain person when I was small, taught the Sunday School class, and put the seed of salvation in there, and then some years later, someone else was used, and then some years later, someone else, and finally, the last person in those links that led to my conversion was such-and-such, and we call him our spiritual father, as did Timothy, or Paul, rather, called Timothy his son in the faith. In that sense, maybe no one has led a whole soul to Christ.

But you know what I mean. Have you ever had the joy of being at least that last link, and dealing with a person, and having the joy of leading a soul to Christ? If you haven't, and there is a possibility that you've

overlooked this, you admit a command from the scriptures. You should, and you can.

Whatever the hindrance may seem to stand between you, God can give you the strength to remove that obstacle, so that you can be a witness for Jesus Christ. Who can evangelize, personally evangelize? Every person who has trusted the Savior. When? On Sunday morning, I told you about the maniac of Gadara, who, on the day of his conversion, was sent home.

Go home and tell thy friends what the Lord has done for you. On the very day of conversion, you can start telling. If there's nothing else you can do, you can simply give your testimony, and say, this is what Jesus Christ means to me.

And I think that is perhaps the most wonderful approach of all. Sinners are very sensitive to Christians telling them, you are down there on the lower plane, I'm up here, I'm a Christian, sit down, I want to tell you how to be saved. They don't like it, and it's not the right approach.

But, as Christians, we can say, I would love to share with you something wonderful that has happened to me. I mean, really wonderful. You are not preaching to them, you're just telling what God has done to you.

And while you're telling it, maybe not while you're telling, but after the person gets home, that thing replays. And you say, you know, I just have to think of what he said. This is a wonderful approach.

So, you can start on the day of conversion to tell how you were saved. There are some times when you shouldn't witness for the Lord. I know that some people who take employment and are running a machine, and a man comes along and says, could you explain to me a verse of scripture? And he stops his machine and stands there for 30 minutes and tells him the way of salvation.

I believe it's wrong. You promised the man that you worked for you'd give him a good day's work, and you have no right to stop your machine to tell him the way of salvation. That's the wrong time.

I suppose it wouldn't be too appropriate if, at three o'clock in the morning, you called up a sinner on the telephone and said, I just got convicted that I didn't speak to you yesterday, and I just thought I'd call you up and tell you how to be saved. How do you think that man would react, a man being called? That's not a good time. There are so many appropriate times.

Otherwise, I suppose there are very few limits as to when we should witness for the Lord. Where should we witness for him? Everywhere. There are so many avenues of witnessing for the Lord.

You'd be surprised how many people cross your pathway each day, and it should be a responsibility on each one of us to say, every person that I have met today, I wonder if any of them could have had an opportunity, and I missed it. An opportunity slipped through my fingers, and I didn't tell that person about the Savior. Now, the last one is how to witness for the Lord.

Again, I think it is very important that we have the right motive in witnessing. If I am witnessing for the Lord, so at the end of the month I can count up the persons that trusted the Savior, and I can give the number at a testimony meeting, it's the wrong motive. If I do it because I love my Savior, and because I have a concern of that person, I want him to enjoy the same peace that I have.

If that's the motive, God will bless. I refer again to the Lord Jesus saying, follow me, and I will make you to be fishers of men. I have met a few fishers in my lifetime.

I must confess that I am not one. I was fishing in the state of Virginia, around Marion, Virginia, one day on the Holston River, all day with an elderly man who enjoyed it, and I said when I came home the next day, I'll never go fishing again unless they pay me by the hour, because I didn't enjoy it. But I do know some people who would give up a Christmas dinner just to go fishing.

Now, what's the difference? They tell me that there's such a thing called as the fishing fever. I don't know what temperature it runs, but certain people have the fishing fever, and they are the successful fishers. Now, in the spiritual realm, I have to ask, if there is such a thing as the fishing fever, where do I get it? I don't know where you get it.

There are some things that you get by doing it. When I moved from Pennsylvania, good old Pennsylvania, to miserable North Carolina, I had to make some adjustments, and one of them was, I wasn't there very long before I was in a home where they fed me collards and turnip greens. Never heard of it in Pennsylvania.

I tried it, and I was polite, but I said, that belongs to the Great Tribulation, that is not for this age. But I kept on eating them, and you would be surprised when I go to a cafeteria and they have turnip greens or collards, I picked them out. I learned to like them by eating them.

And there is a possibility that you will get the fishing fever by fishing. If you'll allow me to tell you the first soul that I ever led to Christ, I suppose I'd only been saved about two years, and I was working with a young fellow, two years younger so than myself, and one day, while we were working together, this was, by the way, on the road gang, not with chains, but in our area, the farmers were allowed to work on the road to do some of the handwork with shovels, and then they would be taken off their tax money at the end of the year. I was working with this young fellow, and I told him how I got saved.

He was interested, and he asked a few questions, and I simply told him about John 3, 16, and told him how I was saved, and that's all. The next morning, he came back to work, he said, Guess what? I'm saved. You are? How did you get saved? After I went home to work, I thought of all those things you told me, and I said, I'm going to do the same thing that he did, and I opened my heart and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I'm saved.

I was shocked. I said, Lord, I didn't mean to do that. It just happened.

I didn't, poor little old me, I didn't know a person like me. I thought that was a preacher shot. I actually helped a young fellow on the way to heaven.

It's terrific. I got the fishing fever right there, and I think perhaps the more we do it, the more we become interested in those who are still outside of Christ. One of the difficult things, perhaps, is how do you start a conversation? You are talking to a person, and maybe you're talking about the Iran situation, or whatever it may be, but do you have an interest in that person? How are you going to turn this conversation? And there are many, many different ways.

Some people say, Are you still going to hell? And that's one way of doing it. Sometimes it works, but not too often. You ask them, Are you a Christian? Of course I am.

What do you think, I'm a heathen? And then you're finished. I used to use that. I've used a number of different ways, and my last one is this.

I meet a stranger, and I say, If you're not too busy and have a moment, I've got a question for you. Oh, go ahead. What happens to a person when he dies? Oh, didn't expect that question.

And a few years ago, talking about death was a no-no, but it's not anymore. Your newspapers carry articles on what Professor so-and-so says that probably happens at death. At Duke University, a while ago, they had some men specialists who sat down with a dime and tried to figure out, as they saw that person going into a coma, and then uttering some words, and trying to find out what's after death.

And they talked to him and said, What do you see now? A wheelbarrow. A wheelbarrow. That's wonderful.

And a little while later, Do you see anything? Yeah, yeah, I see something. What do you see now? A shovel. A shovel.

A wheelbarrow. A shovel. Oh, that gives us a wonderful index.

Now, now we're going to solve this. We're going to put it into an IBM machine and see what comes out at the end. So they do it the hard way, when you could just take the Bible.

But usually, that opens a conversation. And the answers to that question are very, very interesting. And from there, very often, they say, Well, what do you think happens when a person dies? Thank you.

That's what I wanted you to say from the beginning. And then I have the privilege of telling them about the way of salvation. You figure out some way to break the ice.

You may have a different way. But if you ask God, What can I use to start a conversation with a perfect stranger regarding the way of salvation? And God will help you. A man in Newport News told me, I found a way of approach by asking a person, Do you love Jesus? And the majority will say yes.

And then I say, Why? Well, because he has given me a family, he gives me food, he gives me so-and-so, and from that I know he doesn't know the Lord. Or if he says, Because he died for me on Calvary's cross, then I know I'm talking to a Christian. There are a lot of various ways that Christians can use to start the conversation without doing any harm, but helping that person to find the Jesus Christ as Savior.

The clock says 830, and I've got to stop or else apologize for you tomorrow night. But if there's an unsaved one here tonight, I would love to have the privilege tonight. You don't need to go home the same way you came.

The Lord Jesus Christ died for you, and you can leave this service saying on the authority of the Bible, I know that if I were to die tonight, I would go to heaven. Does that sound good to you? I'll be glad to sit down and read the scriptures to you and show you how you can be saved and know it. Let us pray.

Our Father, once more we thank thee for thy word. We thank thee for the solemn responsibilities thou hast put upon us, and also for the glorious privileges thou hast given to us. And we pray, our Father, thou wilt make us soul winners, that we may have a real desire to see these lost ones brought to our blessed Savior.

We thank thee for those who loved us enough to tell us the way of salvation, and we pray that we shall pass this on to others around about us that may be going to a lost eternity. Bless this congregation, each person, whatever barrier there may be that has hindered them from being soul winners up to this point. We pray thou wilt remove that obstacle and help them to enjoy leading people to a knowledge of our Lord

Jesus Christ.

We commit this meeting to thee for thy blessing, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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