



General Topics :: Evangelism the Right Way

Evangelism the Right Way - posted by JoeBenson (), on: 2008/4/11 18:18

Can you let it go?

If you were to compare Jesus style of evangelism to that of evangelism today, you would probably have many problems with it. I believe that most contemporary churches would try to change Jesus evangelistic methodology to that of a more "seeker-friendly" or "tolerant" style.

In fact, if we take a closer look at the Gospel of Matthew 19:16-26, we will see that Jesus was approached by a young man who had the perfect attitude and wanted desperately to receive eternal life. However, Jesus did the last thing that any of us would do; he chased the young man off! Jesus failed to lead the young man "down-the-aisle". Jesus failed to "lead the sinner's prayer". Jesus failed to give the young man eternal life! If this was a courtroom and we were the jury, we would indict Jesus for not doing His job.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about the rich young ruler and the correct methodology of evangelism. Evangelism done the right way, the only way, the Jesus way!

Matthew 19:16-26 16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" 17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 19'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" 20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Matt 19:16-26 (NKJV) (Parallel scripture Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-27)

Void in the Heart

The young man had it all - wealth and power - at such an early age. However, he was in turmoil with a void in his heart that he knew only Jesus could fill. All of his wealth, power, possessions and religion had not given him peace, joy, confidence or hope. He was empty internally. He desperately needed the void to be filled. He was coming to Jesus on the basis of a deeply felt need. He knew what was missing -eternal life. He was coming to Jesus with the right motivation.

His attitude was correct. He seemed to feel his need deeply and was not acting as if he had all of the answers. He was humble with his approach and was open to Jesus direction. There are many people who don't have eternal life but don't feel they need it. Not this young ruler, he was desperate for eternal life! He was desperate and had urgency to his questions. He was very direct and asked, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He was bold. He asked the question in the middle of many people who thought that he had everything spiritually. He risked damaging his reputation by admitting he was desperate and lacking!

Many people think the question that the young ruler asked Jesus, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life," was a way for the young man to trap Jesus into condoning self-righteousness. However, the young ruler's intentions were pure and his question was fair, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" The young man was searching for the truth and needed the void in his heart filled. He was desperate. He was leaning on his felt needs.

The Sin Problem

When the young man approached Jesus, he addressed Him as "Good Teacher." This was not the young man's recognition of Christ's deity. The young man meant simply that Christ was righteous and a teacher from God who apparently had eternal life and might know how he could get it. Jesus responded by questioning the young man's use of titles of calling Him "good." Jesus stated, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. Jesus was not disclaiming His own deity, but rather teaching the young man that all but God are sinners. The young man's most serious defect was his reluctance to confess his own spiritual bankruptcy.

Jesus continued by answering the young man's question by saying, "But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." This answer changes the context of the conversation tremendously. Strictly speaking, Jesus' answer was correct. If a person kept the law all his life and never violated a single part of it, he would have eternal life. But no one can. Since he had come with the right motive to the right source, asking the right question, why didn't Jesus simply tell him the way of salvation?

As I stated earlier in the text, the young man's problem was a lack of acknowledging his own sinfulness. His desire for salvation was based on a felt need. He had anxiety and frustration. He wanted joy, love, peace, and hope. But that is an incomplete reason for committing oneself to Christ.

This even happens in the church today. People feel bad and their emotions are turned upside down because of bad circumstances that most of them caused. They run to Jesus to get saved. Preachers teach a sermon that Jesus will change their lives for the better. They teach that Jesus will give them life in abundance of material things; wealth, health and prosperity! Yes, Jesus will change lives, but only after people admit their sin and fall on their face in repentance!

Our Lord didn't offer relief for the rich young ruler's felt need. Instead, he gave an answer devised to confront him with his sin and his need of forgiveness. It was imperative that he perceive his sinfulness. People cannot come to Jesus Christ for salvation merely on the basis of psychological needs, anxieties, lack of peace, a sense of hopelessness, an absence of joy, or a yearning for happiness. Salvation is for people who hate their sin and want to turn away from it. It is for individuals who understand that they have lived in rebellion against a holy God and who want to live for His glory.

Jesus' answer took the focus off the young man's felt need and put it back on God: "There is only One who is good." Then He held him against the divine standard so he would see how far short he fell: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." But the young man ignored and rejected the point. He was utterly unwilling to confess his own sins.

Evangelism must take the sinner and measure him against the perfect law of God so he can see his deficiency. A gospel that deals only with human needs, feelings, and problems is superficial and powerless to save since it focuses only on the symptoms rather than sin, the real issue. That's why churches are filled with people whose lives are essentially no different after professing faith in Christ. Many of those people, I'm sad to say, are unregenerate and grievously misled.

We Must Repent

The rich young ruler asked Jesus which commandments he should keep. The Lord responded by giving him the easy half of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother." Then He adds, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Scripture says, "The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?'" That demonstrates his shallow perception of the law. It's possible that on the surface he did all those things, but God looks for an internal application. There was no way he could honestly say he had always kept that law. He could not have been telling the truth—he was either lying or totally self-deluded.

And so there was no way the rich young ruler could be saved. Salvation is not for people who simply want to avoid hell and gain heaven instead; it is sinners who recognize how unfit they are for heaven and come to God for forgiveness. If you are not ashamed of your sin, you cannot receive salvation.

At this point, Mark 10:21 says, "And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him." That statement paints a pathetic picture. The young man was sincere. His spiritual quest was genuine. He was an honestly religious person. And Jesus loved him. However, the Lord Jesus does not take sinners on their own terms. As much as He loved the young man, He nevertheless

ss did not grant him eternal life merely because he requested it.

Submit to Christ

Jesus lovingly tried to help the young man see another essential element of salvation: "Jesus said to Him, 'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me' (v. 21). Challenging him, Jesus was basically saying, "You say you love your neighbor as yourself. OK, give him everything you've got. If you really love him as much as you love yourself, that should be no problem."

Jesus was simply testing whether he was willing to submit himself to Christ. Scripture never records that He demanded anyone else sell everything and give it away. The Lord was exposing the man's true weakness—the sin of covetousness, indulgence, and materialism. He was indifferent to the poor. He loved his possessions. So the Lord challenged that.

Verse 22 says, "When the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property." He wouldn't come to Jesus if it meant giving up his possessions. It's interesting that he went away grieved. He really did want eternal life; he just wasn't willing to pay the price of repenting of sin and submitting to Christ.

The story has a tragic, heartbreaking ending. The rich young ruler came for eternal life, but left without it. He thought he was rich, but walked away from Jesus with nothing. Although salvation is a blessed gift from God, Christ will not give it to a man whose hands are filled with other things. A person who is not willing to turn from his sin, his possessions, his false religion, or his selfishness will find he cannot turn in faith to Christ.

Conclusion

Eternal life can only be given by God on His terms. It is not for me or you to judge who will receive it. God's Word tells us that we are to come to Him on His terms; not ours. We are to cry out to the Lord for forgiveness of our sins. It is because of the sins that we have committed against God why we need a Savior.

Many people get it twisted in the church today. Getting saved is not in order to get rich or get you out of your financial problems. It is not to have perfect health or a nice home. It is to be saved only from your sin. Jesus died on the cross to save all of us from our sin and damnation. However, we must repent and put our faith and trust in Him and Him alone.

Evangelism is to spread the "Good News." It is to tell people why Jesus was sent to die on a cross on Calvary. We are to teach and speak to people of the purpose that we need to be saved. We have got to get back to teaching the cross and its purpose. We have to teach about the illness that we all have—sin!

People say that we need to be more tolerant in our evangelism. Was Jesus tolerant with the young ruler? No. Did He teach hell, fire and brimstone? No. However, He did teach what one must do in order to receive eternal life. We must surrender ourselves to Christ by relinquishing all of our worldly lusts. There can be nothing greater than Jesus in our lives.

True and effective evangelism is when the Word of God is taught so that people see that the gift of eternal life can only be obtained by confessing and repenting of your sins and submitting and putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

Contemporary church has confused the terms of outreach and evangelism. Many churches do the role of outreach, but few do the role of evangelism. We are to reach out (outreach) to the communities and show our love and care. However, we are to do it with a first priority of spreading the message of Jesus Christ and why it is so important to be saved. Our first priority should never be the growth of our church or member directory. We can not compromise the message of Jesus Christ in order to "tickle the ears" of the unsaved. We must present God as loving, caring and accepting but only by His terms.

So, we have to let go of the things that are keeping us from God. God will change lives and fill the holes in the hearts of His people. But first, you must first acknowledge that you are a sinner and confess, repent of our sins and submit and put your faith and trust in Him. He will give you the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Joe

Re: Evangelism the Right Way, on: 2008/4/11 19:17

Joe,

Great insight Joe the Lord gave you about the rich young ruler. Although I had identified some of the points, there were some points from the passage that you gave that has never been revealed to me in the passage either in my study nor had I ever heard them preached, although I knew the points to be truth and fact. I will surely remember these points from this passage and echo them to others when the opportunity arises. Thanks.

Re: Evangelism the Right Way - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/4/11 20:23

Quote:

-----Void in the Heart

The young man had it all - wealth and power - at such an early age. However, he was in turmoil with a void in his heart that he knew only Jesus could fill. All of his wealth, power, possessions and religion had not given him peace, joy, confidence or hope. He was empty internally. He desperately needed the absence to be filled. He was coming to Jesus on the basis of a deeply felt need. He knew what was missing - eternal life. He was coming to Jesus with the right motivation.

If he comes to Jesus merely as a "fix-all" to his perceived problems and/or felt needs, then when the seriousness of those problems diminish, or the felt need is no longer felt, his value of Christ will diminish.

This is a great problem today. People coming to Christ to have their "felt needs" met when they have no idea what they truly need. The only true need the rich young ruler had was the need of a savior to keep his soul from eternal damnation...to be saved from the wrath to come.

Jesus continues by showing him that he had ultimately placed his possessions before God...allowing the rich young ruler to see himself as the sinner he was.

We must be convinced we are lost before we can be found. This is true and proper motivation for coming to Christ. All other motivation will ultimately fall short...as it does with this young man.