

CHAPTER 12

Spiritual Elements to Evangelism

1. Reasons why people have not yet come to Christ:

- a. Sample reasons:
 - 1) **Ignorance**: they have never heard the Gospel, Rom 10:14-15.
 - 2) **Sin**: some root of sin has hardened their hearts to spiritual things, John 3:20.
 - 3) **Deceit**: they have been deceived by false teaching about salvation, 1 Tim 4:1.
e.g. They may think that they are already saved, even though it is not by faith alone...
 - 4) **Pride** (rebelliousness): they do not want to humble themselves before the Lord, 1 Pet 5:6.
- b. Complimenting spiritual reasons:
 - 1) God may be hardening their hearts, Prov 1:28-29, Isa 6:10
 - 2) Satan may be blinding their eyes, 2 Cor 4:3-4

2. God's Work of Conviction:

Introduction: The spiritual element of conviction is one that the evangelist does not control directly:

- 1) We may use particular verses that should lead to conviction of sin
 - 2) We may be "prayed up" for sharing the gospel
 - 3) But only God and his Word can judge the secret intentions in the heart of man, Rom 2:16; Heb 4:12-13
- a. The Gospel convicts lost people:
 - 1) Of "sin, righteousness, and judgment," John 16:8
 - 2) Of "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come," Acts 24:25
 - b. The Gospel reveals the hidden motives of men
 - 1) "When God will judge the secrets of the hearts of men," Rom 2:16
 - 2) "For the word of God... is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart," Heb 4:12

Spiritual and expectant evangelism must be aware of God's hidden working in the heart:

- 1) Discerning the receptivity of the person being engaged with the gospel
- 2) Seeking to apply principles of God's Word with love and power to "cast down every argument ... that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Cor 10:5

3. Profile of the Open Heart:⁹⁶⁴

These are characteristics to look for while sharing the Gospel...

- a. He will "receive" the evangelist, Matt 10:40; John 13:20 (cf. John 1:12)
- b. He will listen, Acts 16:14; 1 John 4:6; cf. Luke 10:16
- c. He will hear the Word:
 - 1) Hear and act upon the Word, Matt 7:24-25; Luke 6:47-48
 - 2) Having a hearing of faith, Gal 3:2, 5
 - 3) Hear and believe, John 5:24
- d. He will be a "man of peace," Luke 10:6
- e. He will display a contrite heart toward sin (versus arrogance or indifference):
 - 1) The afflicted soul, Isa 58:10, cf. Psa 22:24-26; 116:10
 - 2) The afflicted and needy, Ps 74:21
 - 3) The brokenhearted, Psa 34:18; 147:3; Isa 61:1
 - 4) The contrite and lowly of spirit, Isa 57:15
 - 5) The humble and contrite of spirit, Isa 66:2
 - 6) The broken and contrite heart, Psa 51:17

⁹⁶⁴See also Chapter 18, "Levels of Openness," "The Open Person," "Profile of an open heart."

- f. Even lost persons may display a spiritual interest:
- 1) The devout or pious men in Jerusalem before Pentecost, Acts 2:5
 - 2) The godfearers (τοῖς σεβομένοις) throughout book of Acts, Acts 10:22; 13:43; 17:4, 17
 - 3) Came to Jerusalem to worship, Acts 8:27

Discussion: Some high Calvinists take the previous characteristics as showing that God is working in persons prior to their hearing of the Gospel (hence undermining the *sola Scriptura* of salvation). If we accept that God must needs work in, with, and by His Word, then another explanation needs be sought. Two possibilities:

- 1) They are seeking the God revealed within them (Rom 1:19) and in their consciences (Rom 2:14-15)—if so, this needs to be reconciled with Rom 3:11

Answer: Sure revelation does not constitute a redemptive seeking after, especially before the hearing of the gospel, which is the power of God.

- 2) God is at work outside of His word, which opens up a problem with Heb 4:12-13, the need for evangelism, God working through sacraments, etc.

Comment: This option does not appear to correspond with the *sensus plenior* of Scripture.

It is clear that the devout, the pious, and the godfearers are not those who say, “Lord, Lord” (Matt 7:22-23). Thus we see levels of saved and lost people being described in the Bible via the Parable of the Sower and in other places (a lost godfearer and a saved carnal Christian). Very interesting! Also note that the Apostle Paul worked harder than the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10).

4. Spiritual Problems in Evangelism:

Introduction: There are spiritual problems with a lack of understanding or misplaced understanding that must be surmounted in evangelism.

- a. A misunderstanding of spiritual things:
 - 1) Misunderstanding the spiritual application of an example, John 3:4; 4:11, 15
 - 2) In fact, this was why Jesus spoke in parables, using word pictures, so that those not meant to understand would not, while to others it would be revealed, Matt 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-13; Luke 8:9-10
 - 3) By contrast the Centurion who understood the spiritual nature of things, and was commended for it. In Luke 7:6-9 Jesus said he had great faith, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.”
- b. Misplacing the power behind miracles:
 - 1) As coming from Satan, Matt 12:24 (cf. Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15)
 - 2) As coming from the men themselves, Acts 14:13

Only God through the gospel can overcome these spiritual blind spots, 2 Cor 4:2-3

5. Biblical Presuppositions—from General Revelation:

Introduction: Differentiation between General Revelation, Natural Revelation, and Special Revelation:

- a) **General Revelation**—God’s revelation to all men, at all times, in all places, which is non-salvific, e.g. Psalms 19:1-6; it leads only to sure judgment (Rom 1:20) and further depravity (Rom 1:21; cf. Psalm 36:1-4)
- b) **Special Revelation**—God’s revelation of Himself directly (as to Moses), through His Son (when He was on earth), and through His Word. *Sola Scriptura* limits salvific revelation in God’s dealings with man to the Word of God, the Bible, Psalm 19:7-13 (the theme of Psalm 119).
- c) **Natural Revelation**—the belief that general revelation contains the possibility or opportunity for salvation outside of special revelation (i.e. the Gospel or the Word of God), often attributed to Thomistic theology (Thomas Aquinas).

One can assume certain innate truths to be in the hearts of those whom the Gospel is shared, even if they won’t outwardly admit them. These are a part of general revelation (as it were, divine *preparatio evangelica*). It is not necessary to share these facts with the person. Rather, they can be a guide as you speak the Gospel with boldness.

a. Presuppositions concerning God:

- 1) All people have a knowledge of God, Rom 1:18-21 (cf. Isa 26:10)
 - a) v 18, “men who suppress the truth”
 - b) v 19, “that which is known about God is evident within them”
 - c) v 19, “for God made it evident to them”
 - d) v 20, “have been clearly seen”
 - e) v 20, “being understood”
 - f) v 20, “so that they are without excuse”
 - g) v 21, “For even though they knew God”
- 2) Men stand in awe of God because of general revelation, Psa 65:8 (e.g. Jon 1:9-14)
- 3) All people have seen the glory of God, Psa 97:6 (cf. Psa 19:1-4; 50:6; 52:15)
- 4) “To Thee all men come,” Psa 65:2
- 5) “He has set eternity in their hearts,” Eccl. 3:11 (cf. Acts 17:26-28).

b. Presuppositions concerning sin:

- 1) Everyone has a conscience that accuses and defends, based on the Law of God written in their hearts, Rom 2:14-15
- 2) All people know of God’s righteous commands, and of the death penalty for sin, Rom 1:32

Translations of δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ in Rom 1:32

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Bishop's	Rotterdam	Young's, Darby, NKJ	CSB	Noye's; ERV, ASV, NAS	KJV, Webster's	NIV (1984); NET; ESV	NJB ⁸⁸	NAB ⁸⁸ (1991)	RSV	BBE	DRA ⁸⁸	NIRV
Righteousness of God	Righteous sentence of God	Righteous judgment of God	God's just sentence	Ordinance of God	Judgment of God	God's righteous decree	God's ordinance	The just decree of God	God's decree	Law of God	Justice of God	That God's commands are right

Notice also, how the message taught in Rom 1:32 is reversed by the Latin Vulgate’s addition of a negated verb form (non intellexerunt):

Consider the three Latin versions:⁹⁶⁵

- ^{VUC} Rom 1:32 Qui cum justitiam Dei cognovissent, non intellexerunt quoniam qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte: et non solum qui ea faciunt, sed etiam qui consentiunt facientibus.
- ^{VULM} Rom 1:32 qui cum iustitiam Dei cognovissent non intellexerunt quoniam qui talia agunt digni sunt morte non solum ea faciunt sed et consentiunt facientibus
- ^{NOV} Rom 1:32 Qui cum iudicium Dei cognovissent, quoniam qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte, non solum ea faciunt, sed et consentiunt facientibus.

These changes are noticeable in the 1899 Douay-Rheims translation of this verse:

- ^{DRA} Rom 1:32 Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand that they who do such things, are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them.
- ^{NAS} Rom 1:32 and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.
- ^{NKJ} Rom 1:32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

⁹⁶⁵VUC=1598 Clementine Vulgate with 1880 glosses by Migne; VULM=1983 German Bible Society edition; NOV=1982 Nova Vulgata from Rome. This last version takes the prior version of the Vulgate and amends it to coincide with the Nestle-Aland 26th edition of the Greek New Testament, as part of John XXIII’s (and hence Vatican II’s) aggiornamento strategy in infiltrating and neutering the work of the Bible Societies (see my paper on “Worldwide Bible Translations and Original Language Texts”; available at: http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/ubs-spcu_text20090116b.pdf; and “Rome, Bible Translation, and the Oklahoma City Green Bible Collection”; available at: http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/rbt_paper20110611a.pdf).

The addition of the “did not understand,” completely negates the teaching of this verse, and its universal applicability to man in his natural state. There are several issues at stake in the interpretation of this verse, but this is the most obvious. This change adversely affects a presuppositionalist viewpoint, as man is made to not understand God’s law or His judgment of sin.

- 3) God’s judgment prepares people for the Gospel, Psa 58:11
- c. Some appear to be waiting to hear of Christ:
 - 1) Isaiah 25:9, 42:4,⁹⁶⁶ 45:24, 51:5, 60:9
 - 2) Note the parable of Christ which seems to parallel this teaching, Mark 4:26-29
- d. However, some anthropological truths:
 - 1) All men are blinded to the light of the Gospel, 2 Cor. 4:4
 - 2) All men are spiritually dead and by nature children of wrath, Eph 2:1-3
 - 3) All men are under the empire of sin, etc., Rom 3:9-11
- e. Conclusion:
 - 1) Although men have general revelation which points them to God, they need the special revelation of the Gospel in order to be saved:

2. This Promise of *Christ*, and Salvation by him, is revealed only by the Word of God; neither do the Works of Creation, or Providence, with the light of Nature, make discovery of *Christ*, or of *Grace* by him; so much as in a general, or obscure way; much less that men destitute of the Revelation of him by the Promise, or Gospel; should be enabled thereby, to attain saving Faith, or Repentance.⁹⁶⁷

Likewise:

Only in Eden has general revelation been adequate to the needs of man. Not being a sinner, man in Eden had no need of the grace of God itself by which sinners are restored to communion with Him, or of special revelation of this grace of God to sinners to enable them to live with God.⁹⁶⁸

- 2) It is obvious that Christian’s do not need to assert the latest apologetic arguments to prove the existence of God, or to prove the validity of the Christian worldview. God has already done this prevenient work through nature and conscience. Ours is to be obedient to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to those that God supernaturally makes open to this message.

6. Times of openness:

Introduction:

While not wanting to be guided by the vain teachings of men, as God’s ways are above man’s ways, and his thoughts are above man’s thoughts...

There are certain crisis times in life, allowed by God, which sometimes allow people to be more open to spiritual things. These crisis times have been put on a continuum (Holme’s Stress Scale) by how much stress they put on a person. are also important times in which one may minister to others in tangible ways, as well as by sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The book of Job, Elihu’s speech teaches us that God speaks to people in their consciences, through dreams and through difficult times (Job 33:14-28):

“Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, When sound sleep falls on men, While they slumber in their beds, Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction, That he may turn aside from his conduct, And keep man from pride; He keeps his soul from the pit, And his life from passing over into Sheol.

“Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, And with unceasing complaint in his bones; So that his life loathes bread, And his soul favorite food. His flesh wastes away from sight, And all his bones stick out. Then his soul draws near to the pit, And his life to those who bring death.

⁹⁶⁶C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch spoke of this verse as indicating a “*gracia preparatur.*”

⁹⁶⁷*Second London [Baptist] Confession (1677)*, Chapter 20, “Of the Gospel, and of the extent of the Grace thereof,” from William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge: Judson, 1959, 1969).

⁹⁶⁸Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillippsburg, NJ: Presbyterean and Reformed, 1948), 75-76.

“If there is an angel as mediator for him, One out of a thousand, To remind a man what is right for him, Then let him be gracious to him and say, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom.’ Let his flesh become fresher than in youth, Let him return to the days of his youth vigor; Then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, That he may see His face with joy, And that He may restore his righteousness to man. He will sing to men and say, ‘I have sinned and perverted what is right, and it is not proper for me. He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light.’”

Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, To bring back his soul from the pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life” The following indicates some of these times of stress. We should be aware of these as we minister the Gospel. Fred Jennings described these as “points of pain.”⁹⁶⁹

In modern psychology certain “points of pain” are placed on “Holmes Stress Scale” (it must be noted that this stress scale betrays its North American context, as it does not contain bombing campaigns, war, famine, torture, being a prisoner of war, being in a refugee camp, having house and property confiscated, etc.). I have included the top twelve stresses on Holmes’ scale:

Death in family.....	100
Divorce.....	73
Marital separation.....	65
Jail term.....	63
Death of a close family member.....	63
Personal injury or illness.....	53
Marriage.....	50
Fired at work.....	47
Marital reconciliation.....	45
Retirement.....	45
Change in health of family member.....	44
Pregnancy.....	40
etc.	

7. Be Aware of Possible Spiritual Steps:

Introduction, Isaiah 5:1-2:

There seems to be spiritual steps in the reception of the Gospel (especially when seen from a human point-of-view, as identified by sociological analysis or the psychology of conversion).⁹⁷⁰

It must be remember that conversion is a spiritual jump from blind to seeing. For example, some persons in the Bible jump from one extreme to the other:

- a) Demoniac from Gerasenes in Mark 5
- b) Woman at the well, John 4
- c) Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9
- d) Philippian jailer, Acts 16

Therefore the expansion of these steps:

⁹⁶⁹From his comments in the Biblical Evangelism class at Crown College on September 17, 1992.

⁹⁷⁰The Engel scale follows the conversion process in a more systematic cognitive approach. This scale was originally proposed by Dr. James Engel of the Wheaton Graduate School (source: Edward Dayton, “To Reach the Unreached,” Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, CA; William Carey, 1981), 591). Here are the eleven stages of awareness of the Gospel that make up the Engel Scale:

1)	No awareness of Christianity	-7
2)	Awareness of the Existence of Christianity	-6
3)	Some knowledge of the Gospel	-5
4)	Understanding the Fundamentals of the Gospel	-4
5)	Grasp of Personal Need	-3
6)	Challenge and Decision to receive Christ	-1
7)	CONVERSION	
8)	Evaluation of the Decision	+1
10)	Incorporation into a Fellowship of Christians	+2
11)	Active in Propogation of the Gospel	+3

- a) Does not to diminish the need for instantaneity of witness nor the fact of its corollary, instantaneous conversion.
- b) Nor do steps imply that human categories can and ought to be applied to evangelism, thereby easily trumping the divine work of the power of the gospel, Rom 1:16, by human types of persuasion, 1 Cor 1:17

The following steps are expansions of the teaching of two elderly missionary women (Jeanne & Mabel) who spent 40 years of their lives in door-to-door ministry in Quebec to begin three churches—in a very difficult area. The metaphor used in Isaiah 5 is one of the farmer seeking to raise up a crop—a parallel idea to the NT parable of the sower.

- a. In sharing the Gospel, clear the ground of rocks: the hindrances of false ideas, Acts 14:14-18
- b. In sharing the Gospel, work the soil:
 - 1) The law is a tutor to grace, Rom 3:19-20; 7:5; Gal 3:24
 - 2) Set a foundation of repentance, Mark 1:4 (cf. Luke 3:3), 15; Luke 5:32; 24:47; Acts 20:21
 - 3) Warn the wicked to wake them up, Ezek 3:16-21, “You shall surely die!”
 - 4) “Break up the fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns,” Jer 4:3 (e.g. Isaiah 5:1-2)
 - 5) Gene Edwards writes, “It is impossible to witness effectively unless you give the Holy Spirit opportunity to prepare the heart.”⁹⁷¹ (i.e. the necessity of the Sword of the Spirit to be applied to the heart).
- c. In sharing the Gospel, sow the seed of the Gospel, Luke 8:11
- d. In sharing the Gospel, water the ground, 1 Cor 3:7.
Watering the ground is done through teaching of the Word.
- e. In sharing the Gospel, God must cause the growth, 1 Cor 3:7.
God’s working shows the need for prayer and continued nourishing from the Word.
- f. In sharing the Gospel, harvest of the crop, John 4:35-36; 15:16.
True repentance and faith in Christ leading to eternal life shows the maturation to salvation of the Gospel in the life of the open heart.

⁹⁷¹Gene Edwards, *How to Have a Soul Winning Church* (Springfield, MO; Gospel Publishing, 1962), 117.

Chapter 12 Appendix

Concerning Politically Correct Recipients of the Gospel

Introduction: Are there certain people, certain religions, or certain groups that are out-of-bounds for evangelism? In an age of ecumenism and tolerance and in a day when churches are signing non-proselytism agreements, how does the Bible speak to the issue of the recipients of the Gospel?

1. For the sake of understanding the boundaries of toleration, let us try to identify ways to determine a politically correct recipient of the Gospel
 - a. Do they say that they are members of another church?
For example: "I'm Catholic!"
 - 1) In which case, one has to determine whether salvation in that church is in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 2) The mere fact of questioning the salvific teachings of another church, however, flies in the face of Christian toleration
 - 3) There is the added problem that the individual may not know, may not care about, or may not even accept the means of salvation as taught in their own church
 - 3) The Evangelical and Catholics Together Statement of 1994, for example, decried the idea of Evangelicals evangelizing among Catholics,⁹⁷² as did the 1994 Colson-Neuhaus Declaration.⁹⁷³
 - b. Do they say that they are baptized?
For example: "I was baptized when I was younger!"
 - 1) In some sacramental and some Evangelical churches, baptism is salvific or equivalent to being "born again"; hence, for those groups the baptism answer should end the Gospel conversation
 - 2) Again, from a biblical standpoint, baptism is a non-salvific ordinance, thus this question becomes a mute point
 - c. Do they say that they believe in God?
For example: "I'm Jewish!"
 - 1) If we were to broaden the parameters of faith and conversion, some would say that a mere belief in God is all that is needed to be saved
 - 2) Questioning a person who believes in God about their salvation is deemed not politically correct
 - 3) However, it is clear that belief in God is not enough, as "even the demons believe" in a monotheistic God and shutter, James 2:19
 - d. Do they say that they are a Christian, and yet have no assurance of salvation?
 - 1) Is the biblical doctrine of assurance of salvation a strong enough that it can be the foundation upon which personal evangelism can be built (i.e. the "Assurance Questions")?

⁹⁷²"Today, in this country and elsewhere, Evangelicals and Catholics **attempt to win 'converts'** from one another's folds. In some ways, this is perfectly understandable and perhaps inevitable. In many instances, however, such efforts at recruitment undermine the Christian mission by which we are bound by God's Word and to which we have recommitted ourselves in this statement. ...At the same time, our commitment to full religious freedom compels us to defend the legal freedom to **proselytize** even as we call upon Christians to refrain from such activity" ("Evangelicals and Catholic Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," in Keith A. Fournier, with William D. Watkins, *A House United? Evangelicals and Catholics Together: A Winning Alliance for the 21st Century* [Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994], 346).

⁹⁷³"There is a necessary distinction between evangelizing [non-Christians] and what is today commonly called proselytizing or 'sheep stealing.'" For "in view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of the common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community." Thus, "We condemn the practice of recruiting people from another community for the purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement" (Geisler and MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 493).

- 2) Does therefore a Christian involved in personal evangelism have the right to “teach” or “edify” another Christian who does not believe in assurance of salvation?
 - 3) In what way is assurance of salvation a salvific issue?
 - 4) Note the issue of assurance of salvation in the Baptist Faith and Message.⁹⁷⁴
- e. Conclusion: Any attempt to restrict the potential recipients of the Gospel to a certain underclass restricts both the universality of the Great Commission and the universal need of salvation by grace through faith alone
2. The Bible is clearly universalistic as to the necessity for evangelism
 - a. The above Great Commission notes on the universality of recipients of the Gospel holds true, all need to hear
 - b. The above “Profile of the Open Heart” compels the Christian to share with anyone who will listen to the Gospel
 - c. The necessity for all Christians to regularly share the Gospel following the example fo the New Testament also bears out the universality of the recipients
 3. On the other hand, non-proselytism agreements are:
 - a. Reminiscent of the admonitions against the Lollards and the Methodists, “Stay out of my parish!”
 - b. Imply that the elements related to salvation and conversion in a statement of faith are not relevant in light of denominational cooperation
 - c. Imply that the Christian should not obey the Great Commission and share the Gospel “in the whole world ... to all creation” (Mark 16:15)
 - d. Imply a theological subjectivism, by which all roads lead to heaven, either within the scope of identified Christianity or even often outside of it!

⁹⁷⁴“All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (“V. God’s Purpose of Grace,” par 2, Baptist Faith and Message 2000; available from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/default.asp>; accessed 14 Aug 2002; Internet).