

CHAPTER 19

Smokescreens and Objections (Street Apologetics)

Introduction—Understanding the Balance:

Tearing down the [false] stronghold in which they trust:

Prov 21:22, “A wise man scales the city of the mighty, And brings down the stronghold in which they trust.”

Yet not being involved in vain disputes:

1 Tim 6:20-21, “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, **avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments** of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’—which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.”

Titus 3:9, “But **shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law**; for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

Silencing those that must be silenced:

Titus 1:10-11, “For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach*, for the sake of sordid gain.”

Knowing what issues are important:

Notice that Jesus avoided the obviously false statement of his followers, in order to teach them a deeper truth...

Preparatory statement:

John 8:30-32, “As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

False statement of disciples:

John 8:33, “They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, “You shall become free?”’”

Sample verses reminding Jews that they were slaves in Egypt (not to mention Babylon or Rome):

Exod 13:3, 14; 20:2; Lev 26:13; Deut 5:6, 15; 6:12, 21; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22; Judges 6:8; Neh 9:36; Micah 6:4:

Exodus 20:1-3, “Then God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.’ [remainder of Ten Commandments].”

Deut 5:4, 6-7, “The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, ... He said, ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me’ [remainder of Ten Commandments].”

Deut 6:12, “then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Deuteronomy 8:14, “then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Jesus, overlooked this clear false statement, responding:

John 8:34-38, “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's offspring; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.’”

Jesus exemplified that there are deeper issues that are more important than catching a person in a false statement. Ours is a wrestling match for their soul!

In John 8, the deeper issue was freedom from sin.

Reaching the Intelligent:

Acts 13: Sergius Paulus, “a man of intelligence”

Notice the false prophet, Bar-Jesus (son of Jesus), has gotten to him first

Notice that Sergius Paulus took the initiative to summoned Barnabas and Saul

Notice the opposition of Elymas

Notice that Sergius was not saved through apologetics or rational argument, but after a power encounter in which Elymas was cursed and blinded

The text reads, “Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).

Acts 17: Paul “evangelizing” the “Epicureans and Stoics”

Paul was broadcasting the Gospel in the marketplace, v 17

The Epicureans and Stoics (opposing views) seemed to be aggressively volleying thoughts with Paul (συμβάλλω), v 18

Paul, however, was “evangelizing Jesus and the resurrection,” v 18

The Epicureans and Stoics, became aggressive, and brought Paul to the Areopagus (perhaps hoping that he would not stand a chance in such a milieu, much like we will see in Acts 25-26)

The Holy Spirit, through Luke, takes a stab at those who are always looking for some new thought or idea, v 21

Acts 25-26: Paul showing his “great learning”

Festus arranges his first formal gathering in the auditorium—King Agrippa is in the audience, as well as all the prominent men of the capital city and commanders of the Army, 25:23

The stage is set and Paul is the main act, 25:23

They are looking forward to some laughs from this Jew who is so adamantly disliked by his own people, 25:24-27

Paul, however, brings a sobering message of salvation, three times sharing the Gospel with them, 26:2-23

Festus, not the one presiding, but the one who set up the whole affair, cuts in on Paul and calls him out of his mind because of his great learning, 26:24

Paul responds politely to Festus, 26:25

Then Paul addresses Agrippa, the one in charge, and brings him to the point of decision, 26:25-29

It is interesting to note that in his defense Paul did not mention that the only reason that he was still in prison was that the former governor, Felix, wanted a bribe from him, 24:26-27

In none of these cases can it be found that Paul appeals to Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle; Paul did not discuss worldview in any of these cases, rather he evangelized the foolishness of the cross (1 Cor 1:18)! Does not Paul’s methodology correspond to Luke’s Great Commission (Luke 24:46-47)?

Now some may be ignorant or have valid objections, much like Elymas was putting into the mind of Sergius Paulus. There is a need for gentleness with the broken (Isa 42) and firmness with the stubborn (Ezek 2-3).

Meeting Common Objections Biblically:

Introduction: The Queen of Screen—“The Woman at the Well” (John 4)

1. Shows how Jesus dealt with some common objections
2. Exemplifies common objections:
 - v. 9 Social objection—sexism, racism
 - v. 11 Misunderstanding spiritual I (similar to Nicodemus, John 3:4)
 - v. 12 Historic religious smokescreen I
 - v. 15 Misunderstanding spiritual II
 - v. 19-20 Historic religious smokescreen II
 - v. 25 Great religious expectation (as a last straw)
3. Jesus seems to be wrestling with her mind and soul to bring her to the point of submission to God, Prov 21:22

Though each person is an individual and thinks independently, there are common ways of thinking which people have to reject a Gospel presentation. The testifier must stand up to these lies by showing what God has to say in His Word.

There is a sense in which the wisdom of God manifested in the Gospel message is foolishness to unsaved man (1 Cor 1:20-21). Thus, without the Holy Spirit no one will be argued logically into the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit must convict of the heart of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). Yet, it is sometimes appropriate to be able to defend the faith when it is necessary (1 Pet 3:15). Argument should be avoided in making this defense (Prov 26:5, 29:9, Titus 3:9), and retreat may be necessary due to hardness of heart (Prov 26:4, Matt 7:6).

These objections can be understood in two ways: denying the authority of God and affirming the rights of self. Isaiah 47:10 speaks of these:

“And you felt secure in your wickedness and said, ‘No one sees me,’ Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; for you have said in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’”

If a person rejects the Gospel they have a false sense of security, and are deluding themselves. Good reasoning from God’s Word, the Bible, along with the power of the Holy Spirit may help loosen the veil over their eyes that they may “see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4).

R. A. Torrey reminds his readers of two points pertinent here:

- “1. Never lose your temper when trying to lead a soul to Christ.
- “2. Never have a heated argument with one whom you would lead to Christ.”¹¹¹²

In his book, *Witnessing without Fear*, Bill Bright devoted a chapter to, “How to Handle Hostility, Questions and Resistance.”¹¹¹³ He explained how to turn the questions that people have into opportunities to share the Gospel. Paul gave the following advice to Timothy:

“To be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men” (Titus 3:1-2)

The “all men” in the text above provides the clue that these admonitions ought to be applied to evangelism. Furthermore, Johan Lukasse offers some helpful advice when we encounter people who incessantly bring up smokescreens:

“We might well meet people, for example, who enjoy a good discussion but are not really interested. We should not waste our time with them and fail to be available to those who are interested and are sincerely searching in some way.”¹¹¹⁴

Several common objections to the Gospel will be noted with some biblical passages to serve as answers. These are not intended to be exhaustive, but they may prove helpful when encountering individuals with objections.¹¹¹⁵

¹¹¹²R.A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ* (Westwood, NJ; Revell, 1901), 174-75.

¹¹¹³Bill Bright, *Witnessing Without Fear* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1987), 139-55.

¹¹¹⁴Johan Lukasse, *Churches with Roots: Planting Churches in Post-Christian Europe* (Bromley: STL, 1990),

¹¹¹⁵R.A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ* (Westwood, NJ; Revell, 1901), 114-32, teaches how to deal with skeptics in a innovative and practical sense. Josh McDowell’s books, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* and *More Evidence* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers), give a thorough examination of the truth of the resurrection. This is especially relevant in evangelism amongst the educated who are skeptical to the Gospel.

1. Some **Objections** and **Smokescreens** in the Bible:

Introduction: A compilation of some examples of what wicked men say in the Bible.¹¹¹⁶ These need to be applied to contemporary issues and thought. However, the essence of the objections and smokescreens don't change, as they are a part of fallen human nature.

a. Indicating a rejection of God:

- 1) "And they say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Thy ways. Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him, and what would we gain if we entreat Him?'" Job 21:14-15

b. Indicating that there is no God (thus no accountability):

- 1) "There is no God!" Psa 14:1, 53:1
- 2) "He does not punish! There is no God!" Psa 10:4

c. Indicating that God does not see our evil (thus no accountability):

- 1) "The Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob pay heed." Psa 94:7
- 2) "No one sees me." Isa 47:10
- 3) "Who will see them [traps]?" Psa 64:6
- 4) "The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land." Ezek 12:8
- 5) "God has forgotten, He hides His face and never looks." Psa 10:11
- 6) "He will not see our latter ending." Jer 12:4

d. Indicating that God is ignorant of our ways (thus no accountability):

- 1) "How will God know? Is there knowledge with the Most High?" Psa 73:11
- 2) "Who hears?" Psa 59:8

e. Indicating God's inability to achieve some end:

- 1) "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" Psa 78:19-20

f. Indicating a pride of life:

- 1) "I am, and there is no one besides me." Isa 47:10
- 2) "I shall not be shaken, from generation to generation I will be free from harm." Psa 10:6

g. Plotting against the godly:

- 1) "Let us completely subdue them." Psa 74:8
- 2) "Let us possess for ourselves the pasture of God." Psa 83:13
- 3) "Now we are ready, we have devised a perfect plan." Psa 64:7
- 4) "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver." Psa 71:11

h. Judging the godly:

- 1) "Aha, Aha!" Psa 40:15
- 2) "Aha, our desire!" "We have swallowed him up!" Psa 35:25
- 3) "When will he die, and his name perish?" Psa 41:5
- 4) "A wicked thing is poured down upon him, that when he lies down, he will not rise up again." Psa 41:8
- 5) "Where is your God?" Psa 42:10

2. **Self-Justification:**

a. There are several examples of self-justification in the responses of people:

- 1) "Follow the Golden Rule and you'll be O.K."
- 2) "You don't need to know the whole Bible, just follow the Golden Rule, God will accept you."
- 3) "If I can forgive myself, then it's O.K." (cf. Luke 6:37)
- 4) "I've never killed anybody. I think God will accept me."

¹¹¹⁶The idea for this study came from Lloyd M. Perry in a class entitled, "Variety in Preaching," as a suggestion for an innovative sermon series.

- b. Examples of this in the Bible:
 - 1) Prov 30:12, “This is the way of the adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, ‘I have done no wrong.’”
 - 2) Hosea 12:8, “And Ephraim said, ‘Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in me no iniquity, which would be sin.’”
 - 3) The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke 18:9-14
 - a) The problem was that the Pharisee was comparing himself to man and not to God, e.g. Matt 5:48
 - b) Jesus made it clear that the self-righteous was **not** justified, Luke 18:14
- c. Concerning self-justification:
 - 1) Who has a clear conscience? No one, Prov 20:9 (cf. Eccl. 7:20)
 - 2) A clear conscience does not justify, 1 Cor 4:4
 - 3) Man’s personal ideas about justification have little value, Prov 12:15, 14:12, 16:25, 28:26
 - 4) Man may justify his actions, but it’s God who justifies, Prov 16:2, 21:2
 - 5) In fact God’s common grace withholds mankind from living to the fullness of corruption according to his nature.
- d. The Bible is clear that man is sinful and perverse, in great need of salvation. The Bible also clearly maintains that salvation is not by works, but that it is made evident through obedience to the Bible:
 - 1) Sin:
 - a) Man is utterly sinful, Gen 6:5, Rom 3:10-20, 23
 - b) Men know that they are sinners, Rom 1:32
 - c) Because of his sin, man cannot save himself, Job 14:4, Rom 3:19-20
 - 2) Salvation:
 - a) It is essential, John 3:3-7, 5:24, Acts 16:30-31, Rev 20:15
 - b) It is not by works, Rom 3:20, 4:3-5, Gal 2:16, Eph 2:8-9, Titus 3:5 (cf. Psalms 49:7-9)
 - c) No one will be justified by the works of the law, Rom 3:20, Gal 2:16
 - d) A clear conscience does not necessarily mean purity before God, Prov 30:12, 1 Cor 4:3-4
 - 3) Obedience:
 - a) Obedience to the Word, John 14:21, 1 John 2:3-6
 - b) Not an anarchy, where everybody does what is right in their own eyes, Deut 12:8, Judges 21:25, Prov 16:2, 25, Rom 3:17-18.
- e. Straightforward speech to the self-righteous:
 - 1) Are they obedient to the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37)?
 - 2) Are they perfect (Matt 5:48)?
 - 3) Is there clear sin in their life? “The word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations.’” Ezek 16:1-2 (cf. Ezek 22:2).

3. Subjectivism:

- a. There are several examples of a subjective attitude which is found quite common:
 - 1) “All religions are the same in their essence, they all lead to God and show us how to get there.”
 - 2) “It doesn’t matter what you think just so you love your neighbor.”
 - 3) “How do you know that you have the truth?”
 - 4) “You know the real problem in the world? People like you! It’s people like you that start all the wars, because you think there’s an absolute and there isn’t. There is no absolute!”
- b. Biblical examples of subjectivism:

Introduction: *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* (1533):

“Rules for Thinking in the Church,” Number 13:

If we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical Church so defines it. For I believe that between the Bridegroom, Christ our Lord, and the Bride, His Church, there is

but one spirit, which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls, for the same Spirit and Lord, who gave us the Ten Commandments, guides and governs our Holy Mother Church.¹¹¹⁷

- 1) Isa 5:20, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”
 - 2) John 18:38, “And Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”
- c. The fallacy of subjectivism must be dealt with.
- 1) There is objective truth in nature: if I jump off a roof, I will fall. The law of gravity cannot be counteracted even with the best intentions. In fact, the same is true with all laws of nature. Nature is an objective reality.
 - 2) If truth is subjective, then there is no right or wrong (see Rom 1:32):
 - a) In such a case, Adolph Hitler was a good guy, because he was acting as he felt best. This is absurd, yet it shows that the subjectivity must be limited.
 - b) If I say I am 27 years old, and if someone else says that I am 42 years old, then it is clear that one person has to be right and the other wrong. Yet in a subjective understanding of things, there is no absolute and both can be right. It is absurd to think that there is no absolute reality—that is the only way to understand things.
 - c) If I overdraw my account, the objectivity of how much money is truly in the account is not in question to the banker. When I go to buy gas, the objectivity of the amount owed for the gasoline bought is not an issue. The issue is for me to pay it. If there is objectivity in such simple transactions in all of life, how can one deny the existence of objectivity in spiritual matters?
 - 3) God has revealed Himself by objective truth:
 - a) Jesus Christ perfectly revealed His Father, John 12:45, 14:9, 1 John 5:20
 - b) Jesus Christ is Truth, John 14:6, 1 John 5:20
 - c) God’s Word is truth, Psa 119:142, 151, 160, Prov 30:2-6

4. Universalism:

- a. Common statements:
 - 1) “I think that God is a God of love. He’s never going to condemn anybody!”
 - 2) “We’re all human, and we all make mistakes. I think that God’s heart is big enough to forgive us. He’s the One that wants us to forgive others, isn’t He?”
 - 3) “Everybody’s going up there. God wouldn’t send anybody to hell.”
 - 4) Theological: The Bible says that Christ died for sinners, bringing righteousness to all men (Rom 5:18). Not believing in universalism is saying that Christ’s death is not enough or not efficacious.
 - 5) Essentially universalism is the idea that everybody will be saved some day somehow.
- b. The Bible’s response to universalism:
 - 1) Regarding a good God not condemning anybody:
 - a) Yes, goodness and love are characteristics of God
 - b) Yet, truth and justice are also characteristics of God
 - c) The condemnation of the unrepentant sinner is inevitable (cf. Rom 1:32, and the innate knowledge of condemnation)
 - 2) Regarding the blanket forgiveness of God:
 - a) God loves the world and offers the world forgiveness (cf. 1 John 2:2)
 - b) The forgiveness of God is conditional on seeking it His way
 - c) God’s way is through accepting the gift of forgiveness and righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ
 - 3) Regarding the person of Christ and the resurrection:
 - a) Regarding salvation only in Christ, John 14:6; Acts 4:12¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁷*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Translated by Anthony Mottola, Ph.D., with an Introduction by Robert W. Gleason, S.J. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 140-41; Imprimi Potest, John J. McGinty, S.J.; Nihil obstat, John P. Sullivan, M.A.; Imprimatur, Francis Cardinal Spellman.

- b) Regarding the importance of the resurrection, 1 Cor 15:19¹¹¹⁹
- 4) Regarding the ultimate salvation of all men:
 - a) It is clear from Scripture that Christ died for all men (cf. 1 John 2:2)
 - b) It is also clear from Scripture that most of mankind rejects Christ (cf. Matt 7:13-14, John 1:10-11)
 - c) One must accept and follow Christ to be saved (cf. John 1:12-13)

5. Questioning God's Fairness:¹¹²⁰

- a. An example: "What about those who have never heard?"
- b. They are *without excuse*: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse," Rom 1:20 (cf. Rom 2:1)
- c. God has given them a conscience that condemns, Rom 2:11-16

6. Atheism, Evolution, and Reincarnation:

Introduction: These ideas are combined because they essentially comprise similar fallacies and error. They may be held simultaneously or individually by any given person.

- a. The common statements are:
 - 1) "I don't believe in God."
 - 2) "I believe in evolution."
 - 3) "I believe we have several lives to live," or "I believe in reincarnation."
- b. The innate knowledge of God as creator:
 - 1) In Romans 1:21 Paul explains that all men have known God. However, he goes on to say that man has suppressed this knowledge of God to follow their sinful hearts. God can awaken the objectivity of His reality to the person being shared with. Continue sharing with the assumption that the individual you are speaking with knows God. One day he will stand before God and give an account. Warn him.
 - 2) Man's move has been to glorify the creation rather than the creator, Rom 1:22-25. Therefore, having their minds darkened (v. 21), becoming fools (v. 22), and choosing to believe a lie (v. 25).
- c. How does the Bible respond to these statements?
 - 1) Psa 14:1 and 53:1 say, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" Although this may not be a verse to use in all sharing circumstances. It lets the person know pretty clearly where he stands with respect to the Bible.
 - 2) Atheism is a subjective form of thought, which is proven by the "I" in "I don't believe in God." You can talk about subjectivity as above. These type of debates tend to be unproductive, bringing in Prov 16:25 et al.
 - 3) Evolution gives no reason for living, other than procreation and existence. There is no reason for existing because man is an animal. One the other hand, the Bible says that God made man for a reason, to know Him, to have fellowship with Him and to obey him. He gives man this abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10):
 - a) The Big Bang theory can sometimes make the evolutionary mind think about a beginning. Then it is important to ask what their was before the beginning. Modern scientific theories show that matter is not eternal, but that it is decomposing. The Bible says, "In the beginning," (Gen 1:1), clearly showing that matter is not eternal.

¹¹¹⁸Numerous books on apologetics deal with the issue of Christ, for example: Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); James W. Sire, *Why Good Arguments often Fail: Making a More Persuasive Case for Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

¹¹¹⁹Some books on apologetics also deal with the resurrection, for example: Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1979).

¹¹²⁰Dick Dowsett in *God That's Not Fair* (Bromley, Kent, UK; STL Books, 1982) covers the topic of God's justice in condemning to eternal judgment.

- b) Einstein's second theory of relativity is also an interesting point to bring up. It states that "all things tend towards disorder." This conflicts fundamentally with the theory of evolution which asserts the opposite: that all living creatures grow more and more complex as they interact with one another.
- 4) Reincarnation as it is understood in the Western societies fits closely with the idea of evolution. It also affirms that a person comes back to life after death in some other life.
 - a) The Bible clearly affirms that there is one death (Heb 9:27) after which comes judgment for every person. One death, as death is understood in the Bible, affirms one earthly life.
 - b) Belief in reincarnation causes every doctrine of Scripture to be put in doubt. The Bible cannot tell the whole truth. Salvation from judgment and hell after death is not reasonable. The reason for the death and resurrection of Jesus become unclear. Some may say they are Christians and believe in reincarnation. However, the Bible and reincarnation are in no way compatible.

7. **Historicity and Truth Claims of the Bible:**

- a. These are called to doubt:
 - 1) "The Bible is an old book from a society so different than ours, how can we understand it?"
 - 2) "The Bible was written by men. And we know that men make mistakes."
 - 3) "The Bible is full of errors anyways."
 - b. The Bible's response:
 - 1) The hardened hearts of some will not allow them to understand the Bible, 2 Cor 4:3-4
 - 2) The effectiveness of the Bible as God's Living Word must be assumed by faith (Isa 55:10-11, Rom 1:16, Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12), even if the person does not agree with it. One may say, "If you were to believe the Bible, then..."
 - 3) Verses attesting the Bible's authority, consistency and truthfulness may be helpful if the person is not a staunch antagonist regarding God's Word. These may be: Psa 119:128, 160, 2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:20-21.
 - 4) Some specific arguments concerning supposed falsehoods in the Bible may be considered. Yet, the Gospel must be the focus of the conversation.
 - c. Several situations dealing with God's Word:
 - 1) For the person saying that there are many interpretations, 2 Pet 1:20-21 is a good verse to point out.
 - 2) For the person saying they believe in God and yet not in the Bible, Psa 119:1-4 and John 14:21 can be good starting points to show them what God's Word says.
8. **Conclusion:** In all these debating types of situations, the evangelist must not forget why he is speaking to the person—to bring them to a knowledge of Christ and the Gospel. This must not be forgotten and set aside for a heated intellectual discussion (Matt 7:6). Remember the power of God's Word and the Gospel—not that of our wisdom!

Chapter 19 Appendixes

Individual and Group Evangelizing

Introduction: How many people should go out in evangelism on a team? Should evangelism even be “done” or is it primarily an activity of the church in worship? This brief study shows the variety of examples in the Bible...

1. Individual (one person by himself): Jer 22:1; 26:1-2; Jonah 3:1-3; Mark 5:19-20; Luke 18:5-7; John 3:1-2; 4:6-8; 5:14; 9:35-38; Acts 17:16-17

Individual by inference, Matt 10:1-10; Luke 9:1-6

2. Two-by-two: Mark 6:7-9; Luke 10:1; Acts 13:2-4; 15:39-40; 19:22
3. Group of men only: Acts 16:3, 11; 20:4
4. Group of men and women: Luke 8:1-3; Acts 18:18

Conclusion: This variety of approaches ought to encourage, rather than discourage individual evangelism, as some are apt to do,¹¹²¹ or even mixed gender evangelism, which is at times necessary (in public places with appropriate safeguards), but may it also show the preeminence of two-by-two evangelism.

By the way, the book of Acts has no examples of “community evangelism” nor of “worship evangelism.” Some seek to equate Paul and Silas singing while in prison for evangelizing, after being beaten and with feet bound to stocks, with a worshiping church service with its architecture, safety, musical instruments, and worship leaders. However, this comparison is quite a stretch, and it’s existence in no way contradicts or countermands the vast evidence of individual evangelism in the New Testament. Proponents of community evangelism are likely ascribing to it based on something other than the authority of the New Testament. And if the use of an outside authority is the case, they cannot say that they stand on the inerrancy of Scriptures in matters of faith and practice.

One student recently wrote on a Contact Report form (related to street evangelism): Why is it that pastors and teachers are congregationally-oriented, but evangelists are not (cf. evangelists, pastors, and teachers in Eph 4:11)? His question concerns both the individual evangelism of the evangelist, as well as the location for evangelism.¹¹²²

¹¹²¹Mark Mittelberg explained how he moved from “Lone Ranger Evangelism” to “Church-Based Evangelism” in his *Building a Contagious Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 23.

¹¹²²For a summary of some locations for evangelism in the New Testament, please see *UE*, Chap 7, I, 3, “Movement and Location of Evangelism Ministry”

Evangelizing and Territorial Issues

Introduction: Consider this verse from Deuteronomy:

Deut 23:24, “When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket.”

1. If the concept of the “vineyard” is taken to mean a church territory or parish, or perhaps even the member of another church, then the figurative meaning of this verse may take on interesting meaning;
2. If the concept of “putting grapes into a basket” signifies spiritual harvesting, via evangelizing, along with the prior territorial interpretation, then here are three distinct historical approaches to this subject.

A. Council of Spier (1524), “Whose region, His religion!”

1. This statement expresses the territorial church view that made its way into the United States before the Revolution. Each colony in the colonial period had its own religion, for the most part, whose clergy were supported by taxes;
2. The territorial church model during the colonial period in the U.S. was modeled from the European State Churches: Roman Catholic (France, Spain, Italy, Austria, etc.); Anglican (England); Reformed (parts of Switzerland); etc.;
3. The exception to the State Church model was Pennsylvania; and it was from the free-market church model of Pennsylvania that came the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

B. John Wesley, “The world is my parish!” (~1740):

1. Interestingly, as to U.S. politics and the Constitution, about 30 years before the founding of the U.S. came the First Great Awakening (~1740);
2. One of the fiery preachers of the First Great Awakening was John Wesley, who was an Anglican minister. When he would travel (or itinerate) and preach in another Anglican parish, the minister there sometimes objected, saying, “Go elsewhere, this is my parish.” Wesley’s reply was, “The world is my parish. Consider:
 - a. This idea was in keeping with Christ’s Great Commission (aka. His resurrection preaching), which was not restrictive in any way, but universal to each and every Christian!

Matt 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...”

Mark 16:15, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’”

Luke 24:47, “and that repentance and remission of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations...”

Acts 1:8, “...and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - b. Wesley’s breaking down the parish mentality was necessary for freedom of worship;
 - c. Note that the parish mentality was used against an OT prophet:

Amos 7:12-13, “Then Amaziah said to Amos, ‘Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah, and there eat bread and there do your prophesying! But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.’”
3. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, Rev Ed. (Rutgers University Press, 2005), communicate the phenomenon of the growth and decline of churches in a “free market economy” of churches.

C. Colson-Neuhaus on “Sheep-stealing”:

1. Projecting a return to the territorial or parish mentality, the Colson-Neuhaus Statement decried when members of one Christian group have the temerity to evangelize among the (past or present) members of another religious group:

“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.”¹¹²³
2. Notice the protectionism assumed by Colson-Neuhaus, calling down a condemnation;
3. Notice the antagonism projected to the evangelist who would dare to evangelize someone from another Christian group (e.g. a Baptist having the audacity to evangelize [a present or former] Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox);
4. Notice the lack of concern for the souls of lost people, whoever’s fold from which they may have come (which radiates a lack of belief in biblical conversion on their part);
5. Notice the assumption of false motives, “for the purposes of denominational or institutional aggrandizement,” which seems to communicate a jealousy on the part of those who do not have growing churches and are not evangelizing!

Conclusion 1: So we have come full circle. Perhaps this study shows that there is nothing new under the sun, as well as the constant societal and religious pressures under which evangelists must fulfill their calling!

D. On the Use of an Implement—or Evangelism Methodology?

Deut 23:25, “When you enter your neighbor’s standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain.”

1. Continuing to use figurative interpretation, as with verse 24, that the neighbor is another Christian denomination, and that plucking heads refers to evangelizing, then to what may a “sickle” refer?
 - a. Could not a sickle, as a manufactured implement, refer to an organized methodology?
 - b. If this is the case, then, could this verse (on a stretch of allegorical interpretation) be prohibiting the forming of gospel presentations and gospel literature directed to bring people from another Christian group to Christ (for example Roman Catholics or Russian Orthodox)?
2. In this case, quite likely, we see an example of allegorical interpretation of the OT stretched beyond its limits:
 - a. The reader may be interested to note how this form of interpretation can be used as it relates to not cutting down “trees for food” in Deut 20:19-20:

Deut 20:19-20, “When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you? Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls.”
 - b. Again, in this case, if waging war and the destruction of trees means destroying the writings of false teachers and leaders, then perhaps “trees for food” are the writings of the enemy suitable for consumption that ought not be destroyed, but used for food?
 - c. On the other hand, elsewhere Deuteronomy teaches the complete destruction of idols and their trappings, Deut 7:25-26:

Deut 7:25-26, “The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it, for it is an abomination to

¹¹²³Geisler and MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 493.

the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.”

- d. Thereby showing how the trickiness of allegorical interpretation can be used to negate the clear teaching of Scripture elsewhere!

Conclusion 2: As is taught in most classes on biblical interpretation, allegorical interpretation can be tricky, and should never contradict the clear teaching of the Scriptures. This rule is especially important, as the NT provides the Christian the proper interpretation and application of the OT.

Length of Time Evangelizing

Introduction: While the Bible teaches “now” evangelism, it may be necessary to spend some time reasoning, opening, setting forth, and confronting (cf. Acts 17:2-3). We should expect people to be touched by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of God immediately. Yet here are some passages that seem to indicate how much time was spent in evangelism (*before* being kicked out of or removing himself from the synagogue):

1. Apparent immediate conversion, Acts 8:26-39; 16:13-14, 25-34
2. After a full day of conversation, Acts 28:23-24

Note the verbs used:

- Explained [ἐκτίθημι, main verb]
- Solemnly testified [διαμαρτύρομαι, participle]
- Persuading [πείθω, participle]

3. The next Sabbath, Acts 13:44
4. Three Sabbaths, Acts 17:2-3

Note the verbs used:

- Reasoned [διαλέγομαι, main verb]
- Explaining – opening [διανοίγω, participle]
- Demonstrating – giving evidence [παρατίθημι, participle]
- Proclaim [καταγγέλλω, participle]

5. Three months, Acts 19:8

Note what he did during this time:

- Spoke boldly [παρρησιάζομαι, main verb]
- Reasoning [διαλέγομαι, participle]
- Persuading [πείθω, participle]

Conclusion: In the chapter “Follow-up Is Important,” I discuss the varied lengths of time spent on follow-up. It goes from no follow-up (Mark 1:38; Luke 4:42-44; Mark 5:18-20, Luke 8:38-39 [e.g. John 8:11]; Acts 8:39; 18:20), to no follow-up mentioned (Acts 13:12-13), to several days of follow-up (John 4:40-42; Acts 10:48; 20:6), to extended follow-up (Mark 3:13-14; Acts 11:26; 17:14; 18:11; 19:10; 20:31). Ascribing to a required length of time in follow-up is not a valid argument.

Similarly, in evangelism, there is a recent interest in taking extended time in evangelism, allowing the supposed “human aspects” of evangelism to take effect (friendship, lifestyle, service, or apologetics).¹¹²⁴ Imposing a required length of time, and especially shunning or degrading “now” evangelism, though popular, is unhelpful and not consistent with Scripture.

¹¹²⁴“I’ve learned the hard way that pressing people to take steps for which they are not ready will backfire. In some cases it can even short-circuit the whole process” (Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 59). See also Steve Sjogren (*Conspiracy of Kindness* [Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1993], 22-24; and Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Church: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 67).

Concerning the Average Age of Converts

Introduction: A possible fallacy, common in established church areas (e.g. in the U.S.), is that *most* people come to Christ prior to 18 years of age. This figure is especially true when it involves second generation Christians.

However, when the Bible provides examples of named converts, they are *almost always* mature persons:

1. Woman at the well, married five times, John 4:17-18
2. Those in established careers:
 - a. Zaccheus (tax collector), Luke 19:2
 - b. Nicodemus (a ruler of the Jews), John 3:1
 - c. Ethiopian eunuch (in charge of Candace's treasure), Acts 8:27
 - d. Cornelius (Centurion), Acts 10:1-2
 - e. Priscilla and Aquila (tentmakers), Acts 18 (circumstances of conversion unclear from text)
3. Those with families: Cornelius, Lydia the seller of purple fabrics, Philippian jailer
4. Of the man born blind, "Ask him; he is of age [an adult], he will speak for himself," John 9:21
5. Probably young adults: rich young ruler, Thief on the cross, and Saul (who became Paul) who was already well-educated prior to his salvation.

Conclusion: Although important, evangelization needs to be more than just reaching children. By the way, France recently (May 2000) passed a law against mental manipulation of children or the elderly.

When Do You Shake the Dust Off Your Feet?

Introduction: An African gentleman from Uganda recently told me that we should leave Muslim persons alone (cf. Matt 13:24-30) and not share the Gospel with them. God will decide those that are his at the end of time. What of this view? Is this a matter of shaking the dust off of one's feet, as far as a religious groups goes?

“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn”’” (Matt 13:24-30).

1. The teaching of Jesus, Matt 10:14-15, Mark 6:10-11, Luke 9:5; 10:10-11:
 - a. Examples (in principle) in the life of Jesus:
 - 1) Teaching in parables so that they did not understand, Matt 13:10-17
 - 2) Jesus not able to do miracles in His hometown because of their unbelief, Matt 13:54-58
 - b. Principles:
 - 1) Shaking the dust off our feet means we engage people in conversation until they have the opportunity to reject the Gospel
 - a) We must make it personal
 - 2) Shaking the dust off our feet includes houses and cities, cf. Matt 10
 - c. Points of application:
 - 1) Have you ever shaken the dust off your feet?
 - a) It *is* commanded in God's Word in the context of the evangelism training of Jesus!
 - 2) If you are not sharing the Gospel there will be no opportunity to shake the dust off of your feet!
 - a) Notice in Matthew it says “nor heed your words”
 - b) In Mark it says, “does not listen to you”
 - c) Both imply a verbal witness of the Gospel
 - d) Is God using your vocal cords to share the Gospel message with the lost?
 - 3) Shaking the dust off your feet implies that this is far more than a marketing campaign, such as mass mailings and the distribution of invitations to church:
 - a) Evangelizing—to the point of shaking the dust—implies an urgency
 - b) Evangelizing—to the point of shaking the dust—implies the urgent need to make a decision
 - 4) You cannot get to the point of shaking the dust off of your feet until you are engaged in an evangelistic witness:
 - a) You must bring the person to the point of decision in order to shake the dust off of your feet with integrity
 - b) Smiling, handing a tract, praying a nice prayer, and going on to the next door is not enough
 - c) In order to shake the dust off your feet, there needs to be an engaging spiritual conversation
 - d) This goes against our nature as people—not wanting to be offensive:
 - (1) By the way, Paul did say, “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32)
 - (2) Nevertheless, the Gospel is an offense to those who are perishing (e.g. 2 Cor 2:15-16; Gal 5:11)
 - e) **“Shaking the dust off of your feet” seems to be Jesus saying that we ought to engage people to the point of decision**

- 5) If you have not shaken the dust off of your feet (hence no open rejection of the Gospel), then there is opportunity for continued witness
 - a) It seems implied that if we have not shaken the dust off of our feet that we should go back to the same house or apartment
 - b) Jesus made it clear in Matthew that He is including homes in the receiving or rejecting
 - 6) Have you maximized those open doors that did not lead to shaking the dust off of your feet?
 - a) This is perhaps a common area of weakness in evangelism:
 - 1) We don't engage people to the point of decision
 - 2) We don't capitalize on the opportunities and open doors that God provides
 - b) We are scatter shooting the Gospel when God wants us to use a rifle and engage individuals!
2. Principles from the example of the apostles, Acts 13:49-52; 18:5-6:
 - a. Notice that this shaking was symbolic and not ritualistic
 - b. Shaking the dust off their feet was not a ritual to bring a voodoo-type of fear on the people
 - c. The goal of the shaking was *not* to induce persons to the fear of God and repentance, rather it is a visible symbol of coming judgment
 - d. Shaking the dust off their feet did *not* mean that the word was *not* having success, see Acts 13:48-49
 - e. Shaking the dust off their feet did not imply that they felt their method of evangelism was wrong or needed to be adjusted
 - f. Shaking the dust off their feet included when a political system did not provide them freedom to evangelize (i.e. freedom of speech)
 - g. Shaking the dust off their feet did not discourage the believers
 3. Parallel teaching:
 - a. "He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you," Prov 9:7-8
 - b. "Do not speak in the hearing of a fool," Prov 23:9
 - c. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly. Answer a fool as his folly deserves," Prov 26:4-5
 - d. "When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest," Prov 29:9
 - e. "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces," Matt 7:6

"Verse 6 is not a directive against evangelizing the Gentiles, especially in a book full of various supports for this, not least 28:18-20 (10:5, properly understood, is no exception)."¹¹²⁵
 4. Recognizing when to shake the dust off your feet:¹¹²⁶
 - a. Occasions: in evangelistic situations when the Gospel is being communicated, Acts 13:16-41, "Shook the dust off their feet," 18:5, "Shook out garments."
 - b. Responses to the Gospel necessitating this unfortunate retreat:
 - 1) Contradiction, Acts 13:45
 - 2) Resistance, Acts 18:6
 - 3) Blasphemy, Acts 13:45, 18:6
 - 4) Persecution, Acts 13:50
 - c. These responses necessitate appropriate warning, Acts 13:46-47, 18:6
 - d. A public shaking of the dust off one's feet or garments thereby signifies "disassociating himself from the pollution of those lands and the judgment in store for them."¹¹²⁷

¹¹²⁵Donald A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 185.

¹¹²⁶"Levels of Openness: The Closed Person" (above) gives a practical look at this idea of shaking the dust off of one's feet.

¹¹²⁷Carson, *Matthew*, 246.

Evangelism, Spiritual Fatigue and Recuperation

Introduction: John 6:33, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

1. The Fact of Spiritual Drain in Ministry:
 - a. Elijah, 1 Kgs 19
 - b. Jonah, Jonah 4
 - c. Jesus:
 - 1) During the temptation, Matt 4:11, Mark 1:13
 - 2) Jesus’ exhausted sleep in the boat, Luke 8:22-25
 - 3) The woman with a hemorrhage, Mark 5:40
 - 4) During His prayer at Gethsemane, Luke 22:39-47
 - d. Paul, 1 Cor 2:3-5, 2 Cor 7:5-6 (almost to the point of depression!)
2. Spiritual drain and a burden for people, Matt 9:35-38 (2 Cor 11:28-29):
 - a. The strain of people seeking ministry
 - b. A burden for people developing due to great spiritual needs
3. Spiritual drain and discouragement:
 - a. Elijah, 1 Kgs 19:2-4
 - b. The apostle Paul, Acts 18:9-10
4. The need for rest and recuperation:
 - a. God giving restful sleep, Psa 4:8, 127:2, Prov 19:23 (e.g. 1 Kgs 19:5-6; Jer 31:26; Mark 4:37-38):
 - 1) The Apostle Paul writes of sleeplessness in the ministry, 2 Cor 6:5, 11:27 (cf. Psa 102:7)
 - 2) Remembering that too much sleep is laziness, Prov 6:10-11, 26:14
 - 3) Also remembering that meditation on God’s Word is more important than sleep, Psa 119:147-148 (cf. Jos 1:8, Ps. 1:2)
 - 4) Also remembering that the disciples were sleeping when they should have been praying, Matt 26:40-46; Mark 14:37-41; Luke 22:45-46
 - b. Extended private prayer and meditation as means of rest and recuperation:
 - 1) Jesus getting alone, Matt 14:13, 23, Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42, 5:15-16, 21:37-38, John 8:1-2 (with His disciples, Mark 14:13ff.)
 - 2) Meditation:
 - a) “Cease striving and know that I am God,” Psa 46:10
 - b) Waiting on the Lord, Isa 40:30-31
 - c. The need to get away:
 - 1) Mark 6:31, “And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.’”
 - 2) Luke 9:10, “And when the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. And taking them with Him, He withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida.”
 - d. Rest through being a guest:
 - 1) Jesus was a guest on numerous occasions, Matt 9:10-13, Mark 14:3-11, Luke 7:36-50, 10:38-42, 14:1-24, 19:1-10, 24:28-31, John 2:1-11
 - 2) Jesus did not refrain from ministry in these circumstances. However, it must have afforded Him some rest.
 - e. Prolonged recuperation after a missionary journey, Acts 14:28
5. Promises for rest, peace, and renewed strength, Prov 1:33, Isa 40:29-31, Jer 31:25, Heb 4:9-11
6. Spiritual fatigue and perseverance in doing good:
 - a. Teaching: Gal 6:9, 2 Thess 3:13 (cf. Phil 3:12 and Heb 10:36)
 - b. Ministering while under spiritual fatigue, Mark 6:33ff., John 4:6; 2 Cor 7:5