

Sharing the Gospel ... the 3-Be's

Several months ago, I had the honor of presenting a lesson before a group of mature Christians from our Collierville, Tennessee congregation. As is always the case with such invitations, the first challenge, absent guidance from the expected audience, was to determine what topic might best serve the audience and those with whom they may interact. I chose to explore some of the many challenges faced by those wishing to share God's Word, with the hope of arming the saints to assist the less experienced.

As is always my technique, let me first offer a brief disclaimer. Like many of you, I am a servant of our risen Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. What Bible knowledge I possess has come from years of study and the hard work of the many caring believers with whom I have been privileged to learn. Please verify what you are told, whether by me or by others. We are all fallible and no matter how genuine the intentions, errors sometimes find their way into our understanding. President Reagan once said of a very different subject, "Trust but verify"; I would argue this to be fine policy for use in one's spiritual life.

With the disclaimer out of the way, let's dig into the day's topic. Sharing the countless lessons within God's Word and specifically the Gospel message can be challenging. Academic preparation certainly plays a large role, and the identification of evangelism opportunities can be difficult. Additionally, many Christians struggle with the development of a bold willingness to speak of spiritual matters when opportunity does knock. This frequently requires some to overcome fear of rejection and other concerns that frequently revolve around Bible knowledge and the possibility of teaching errors, which have the potential for putting the listener at risk. These are legitimate struggles along the path of Christian growth, and I suspect that if one were to poll their close friends, it would likely be discovered that a surprising percentage of the Lord's family wrestles with these challenges.

Examination of God's Word reveals His expectation that we grow and overcome our evangelical challenges. Thankfully, the Bible provides both training and encouragement in this very subject. In effect, God has provided us with the Master's job-training manual. However, we **do** have to read the manual and act upon its lessons. God's Word tells His people to be "bold as lions" (Proverbs 28:1). We are to be obvious to the world around us (Romans 2:19; Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:12) and very salty (Matthew 5:13), enhancing all with whom we come in contact. We must not deny Christ (Matthew 10:32-33) through our silence nor through our fears (Revelation 21:7-8). A close reading of Revelation 21:8 will motivate even the most timid believer toward the goal of a mature ability to faithfully and obediently share God's Word.

While it is up to each one of us to overcome our own set of challenges, those of us who may be further down that road must stand as quality examples and encourage others at every opportunity. For some, the lion-like boldness of Proverbs 28:1 is more calico than carnivore, but that's okay as long as faithful effort is being made toward that Paul-like boldness so highly prized within the pages of Scripture. The development of these skills will require time, study and effort, and it can be summed up in the 3-Be's: (1) **Be a good example**, (2) **Be prepared**, and (3) **Be willing**.

Being a good example includes being *blameless*, *harmless* and *obvious* (Philippians 2:15-16). One must *flee sin*, develop *Godly character* traits (1 Timothy 6:11) and live a *disciplined* life (Titus 2:11-13) if one is to be a proper example to others.

Being prepared to share God's Word will require similar effort. We must be *prepared* always to give a "defense ... for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The development of accurate, bold and faithful skills will require *diligent study* (1 Timothy 4:13-16). We can take heart in the knowledge that God does not leave us without His promise that we can trust that *the Scriptures will prepare us* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) for the task at hand. Let me encourage you to read Paul's 3:16-17 observation very closely and discover the depth of this wonderfully declarative Pauline statement; there is no wishy-washiness here, but instruction to trust God's Word to meet your evangelism needs. If we will trust, He will provide.

Being willing to share Scripture can be difficult. We should find comfort in the knowledge that Jesus, the apostles, disciples and early believers preached in far more hostile environments. Even today, one need only scan recent news events to find examples of those professing the Christian faith struggling under the heel of societal pressures and even physical harm. If we are to be faithfully obedient followers of our Lord and Savior we must *share the Gospel* (Mark 16:15) *without shame* (Romans 1:16) and with no tendency toward surrender or compromise (2 Timothy 4:1-5). As Paul told Timothy in the same reading so he tells you and me that we must "*fulfill our ministry*."

When I reflect upon my journey of faith and the lengths to which God went to provide for my eternity, I'm both humbled and emboldened. I want to be the best possible example to others and be ever-prepared and willing to share God's Word and the hope within. Living a faithfully obedient Christian life is a reasonable sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2) and a high honor.

I pray that you share these sentiments. Let's work to show ourselves "approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15-16) so that like Paul, we too will be found to have run a faithful race (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

By Jon Brittingham