

HOW THE CHURCH SPEAKS OF JESUS

A CORE COURSE ON:

EVANGELISM

PROPERTY OF:



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Abstract:

An overview of evangelism: its definition, motivations, hopes, church culture, guiding principles, and methods with an additional focus on application.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: *The Function of Doctrine*

The following is taken from Kevin Vanhoozer's *The Drama of Doctrine*, (15) and may provide a helpful way of discussing and applying systematic theology with your congregation.

- (1) **Coping** — Making sense of the vast, complex, and seemingly chaotic reality we find ourselves in and helping us to live out our God-given role in it.
- (2) **Celebrating** — Ascribing the worth that God is due for who he is and what he has done by truthful and Spiritual speaking about him.
- (3) **Communicating** — Explaining and making clear who the Triune God is, what he has done, and how he wills us to live before Him to those in and outside the church.
- (4) **Criticism** — Struggling “to demarcate true from false witness to God and his work.”
- (5) **Continuing** — Guiding and impelling us to live out our place, individually and collectively, in God’s redemptive mission in the world.

“Doctrine has to do with what faith seeking understanding gets when its search is successful. To be precise: Christian doctrine is the reward that faith finds at the end of its search for the meaning of the apostolic testimony to what God was doing in the event of Jesus Christ.” - Vanhoozer

(4)

Table of Contents

Session 1 - Overview and What is the Gospel?	3
Session 2 - Evangelism: What, Who, and How? (Part 1)	9
Session 3 - Evangelism: What, Who, and How? (Part 2)	13
Session 4 - How should we evangelize?	17
Session 5 - What is a culture of evangelism?	22
Session 6 - Why don't we Evangelize?	26
Session 7 - Why should we Evangelize?	33

Session 1 - Overview and What is the Gospel?

What is the point of this course?

- (1) To understand what *is* and what *is not* evangelism.
- (2) To foster a “culture of evangelism” within Geist Community Church (insert church name here). That is,
 - (a) to learn how to do evangelism as a local church community and not merely as individuals
 - (b) to prioritize reaching the lost with the gospel as the Lord commanded us and not merely “catching loose fish” (people who are already believers looking for new church homes)
 - (c) to demonstrate the above in our *weekly* conversations, fellowship, and private/corporate prayers.
- (3) To properly address those fears and sins that so “easily entangle us” (Heb 12:1) and keep us from sharing the gospel with those who without it are doomed to an eternity in hell.
- (4) To see every person attending the class share the gospel at least one time with an unbeliever.

What is the structure of this course?

- (1) **The class is modeled in 6-7 weeks, and it’s structured around a number of questions including (but not limited to):**
 - What is evangelism?
 - What are things that people commonly think of or associate with evangelism today (in and outside of the church)?
 - What keeps us from evangelizing others?
 - Why should we evangelize?
 - What are the *pre*-requisites for evangelism if there are any?
 - What is a culture of evangelism?¹
 - How do the local church and evangelism connect?
- (2) **The class will also involve multiple “workshop exercises” meant to help prepare you for sharing your faith. While those present each week will be invited to participate in these, it is certainly not required (half of the learning may come simply from watching someone else try).**
 - What is your 5-minute gospel presentation?

¹Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*, 41–61

- How do you study the Bible with an unbeliever and what books should you study?
- How do you start a conversation with a stranger?
- How do you tailor and weave the gospel into your conversation?
- How do you deal with a “fear of man” (i.e. rejection & persecution)?

(3) Helpful Resources (copy and print):

- Mark Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2007)
- Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014)
- J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1991)
- Mack Stiles, *Speaking of Jesus: How to Tell Your Friends the Best News They Will Ever Hear* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995)
- Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People’s Hearts the Way Jesus Did*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004.
- J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015).
- Heman Lincoln Wayland, ed., *The Autobiography of George Muller*, GLH Publishing Reprint, 2015 (Louisville, Kentucky: GLH Publishing, 2015).

Where do we start with a discussion about evangelism?

The Idea of Evangelism

- We read this in Mark 1:1 Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] = “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”
- This word εὐαγγέλιον (a noun) is the Greek word from which we receive the word “gospel” (good news); and it is the verb form of this word εὐαγγελίζω, from which we derive the idea of “evangelism” which can mean **to proclaim (announce, preach, share) good news (gospel)**.
 - This is particularly a favorite word of the apostle Paul to describe his own work (Gal 1:8,11, 16; 4:13) and even his calling (1:23) declaring that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to me, *in order that I might preach* (εὐαγγελίζωμαι) him among the Gentiles...”
 - Luke also uses this word multiple times:
 - 1.) In the mouth of angels such as Gabriel declaring “I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this *good news*.” (1:19) or the angel that went to the shepherds at night (2:10)

- 2.) To describe the work of John the Baptist (Lk 3:18; cf. Isa 40:9 “herald of good news” LXX which Mark connects John’s ministry to Mk 1:2-3).
 - 3.) That Jesus uses to describe his own ministry reading from Isaiah in the synagogue describing himself as one the LORD has anointed “*to bring good news to the poor*” (Lk 4:18-19; cf. Isa 61:1-2 LXX)
- NOW the question remains, ***what is that good news?***

What is the good news?

- Those of us that are “good Christians” may have our gospel tracts at the ready, our copies of Greg Gilbertson, our “God, man, Christ, response” presentation, and that is all well and good...BUT let’s put a pause on that for a minute!
- Why slow down? Well, upon further reflection none of the above passages clearly reveal or tie the word εὐαγγέλιον with something as ‘neat and tidy’ as what we would like to think. So, what do these Scriptures immediately suggest the εὐαγγέλιον is?
 - For Gabriel and those angels it seems to be *Jesus’ coming* (virgin birth)
 - For John the Baptist it seems to be *YHWH’s coming* (“preparing the way for the Lord”, or as Isa 40:9 calling people to “Behold your God!”). More specifically, *YHWH’s coming 1.) with might 2.) to rule and 3.) to gather and shepherd his flock* (v.10–11).
 - For Jesus in Luke’s gospel it seems to be *His Coming as a Spirit-Anointed Liberator* (which he says is fulfilled among them in v.21)
 - For Mark it seems to be *The Coming of the Son of God with Judgment* (this is apparent when one reads the wider context of Mal. 3 depicting the Lord going to cleanse his temple as Jesus will in Mark 11–13; and the context of Isa 40 depicting the Lord’s divine court case against idolater).
- **Conclusions?** From the above texts that closely relate to the word-usage we can conclude that the gospel has ‘something’ to do with *‘the coming of the Triune God (YHWH, Son, and Spirit) to save (liberate/gather) and judge people.’*
 - I think that’s a pretty good definition for looking at only a few texts! Though it must be noted, the idea of the gospel/good news does NOT need to be semantically present (the actual word) for *the idea to be the ever-present fount and current from which the Scriptures flow forth and run along*. In fact, hopefully, if you are a Christian you would agree that it is!

DISCUSS: IF the gospel is the ever-present fountain and current to all Scripture, why ask the above questions? Why is that helpful for *practical* evangelism?

- **Foremost**, we want to show *where* we get our message. Whether we were converted as a kid in a Christian home, reached by a friend, an outreach program, or even a Youtube video, the *source* of the good news is the Scriptures and the God who inspired them! There are TOO MANY problems trying to “proclaim the good news” from another source (ex. the ever-changing flow/beliefs in church history that led up to the Reformation).
- **Second**, while (as we’ll see) evangelism as a concept is simple, that does not mean it is easy. Unbelievers constantly attempt to poke-holes in the testimony and words of believers. Ultimately, this is fine! We MUST trust that God’s sovereign work to reach the lost doesn’t depend on our perfect performance; YET, it is helpful to be able to show that *even the language we use as Christians is biblical and therefore, consistent* (that is, “We’re not making this up!”)
- **Third**, the above examples clarify that the gospel is NOT man-centered, it is God-centered. It revolves around *His* coming. This also shows (**fourthly**) that the good news is *ACTUAL NEWS!* It is *historical!* Line up Christianity next to almost any other religion in the world, and you’ll see it makes real historical and verifiable claims about God *in the person of Jesus* that few religions attempt to make. We are not just proclaiming moral principles, **we are proclaiming an historical event!**

- That all being said, our intent in this class IS NOT to build up our understanding of the gospel from the ground up, so we will NOW turn to that gospel definition you’ve likely heard in other Core Courses...

DISCUSS: As you read each section ask the class to consider the strengths (!) and weaknesses (X) of each point if you tried to use this presentation as is:

- **God:** Right away, what does it mean to be righteous? (X) *God as Creator* (!), but what if someone doesn't know the Creation story? What if someone wants to dispute creation? (X we'll come back to "disputes" later) Man's parts, purpose, and responsibilities (!) but the same issue with the tree of good/evil, you have to know the story (X). Communion with God as ultimate good and happiness (!)
- **Man:** Why is man's condemnation so severe (i.e physical and spiritual death forever)? (X another "dispute" that will often get brought up) What does it mean to be "wholly defiled"? (! important to mention but X probably needs more explanation, **since it is** becomes essential in explaining *why* we can't save ourselves. Furthermore, most people do not believe themselves 'depraved', which we'll also discuss).
- **Christ:** Jesus as eternal God and man (!), died as a substitute for us (!), rose from the dead (!), and the offer of salvation (!). These are all things the apostles revolve their gospel presentations around in Acts.
- **Response:** Captures that man must *both* repent and believe (! even though we are justified by grace through faith alone, repentance is essential). Also captures the immediate promises of peace with God (!). However, it doesn't include the implications for the rest of a person's life (X taking up your cross, no longer your own)

(1) God, man, Christ, response.² (one way you may put it below)

- **God** is the righteous Creator of all things. He made man, male and female in his image, body and soul, to represent him as priests/kings in the earth ruling and representing him "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts" and the external command to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, 'lest they surely die; yet while maintaining their obedience existed in happy communion with God (**Gen 1:27-28; 2:16-17; LBCF 4.2**³)
- **Man** in Adam, the 1st man, willfully broke God's commandment and by this sin "fell from [his] original righteousness and communion with God" and brought death to all mankind, both physical and spiritual, becoming "wholly defiled in all" our faculties (**Rom 3:10-18; Rom 5:12-21; LBCF 6.2**). God,

² Always try to have some copies of this to giveaway. Gilbert, Greg. *What Is the Gospel?* 9Marks Series. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010.

³ This can be googled for free online. *London Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689)

thus being perfectly holy, just, and loving all goodness has placed man under sure condemnation for their sins.

- **Christ**, the eternal Son and Word of God, was sent into the world by the Father as a man, born of a virgin to save people from their sins (**Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:1-18; 3:16; Luke 1:26-38**). Being born pure as the God-man, he lived a righteous and unblemished life and offered himself on the cross as a substitute for his people, and died under the wrath of God and in accordance with the covenants of old (**Ex 12; Lev 16**), to satisfy said wrath. God's wrath thus being turned away, Christ rose from the dead on the 3rd day, vindicating himself as the Son of God, claiming his rightful throne, conquering the power of sin, and offering eternal life and his salvation to all who receive him (Luke 24) .
- **Response**. Man, recognizing the love of God displayed in Christ and their own sin, must repent (turn from sin) and believe (trust wholly) the aforementioned good news as the only means of being made right with God and they will be justified and have peace with God, no longer being under condemnation forever (**Acts 2:36-41; Rom 5:1; 8:1; 10:9-13**).

CLOSING: Next week will have the first 'workshop exercise':

What is your 5-minute gospel presentation?

End the class by your own mine (to avoid 'intimidating people or having them construe their presentation to my 'style') and ask if one or two other people would be willing to try either at the beginning or middle.

Session 2 - Evangelism: What, Who, and How? (Part 1)

DEMONSTRATE (5-10 min): Ask for two volunteers (try to plan this the week before). One to play the role of the “unbeliever” and another to be the one sharing their faith. Encourage the Christian to practice asking for permission to share first, then have them give their 5-minute gospel presentation. Afterwards, ask if anyone had any thoughts? Positives/negatives?
Try and get one positive encouragement and one critique.

What is (and isn't) Evangelism? (20-25 min)

- “Evangelism is teaching (heralding, proclaiming, preaching) the gospel (the message from God that leads to salvation) with the aim (the hope, desire, goal) to persuade (convince, convert)...if any of the four components are missing, we are probably doing something other than evangelism.”⁴

1.) Teaching - That is, there is no evangelism without words (**Rom 10:14–17**).

Indeed, Jesus comes as the Word of God made manifest. Why? Because the way of salvation is not self-evident. We cannot deduce it from God’s natural revelation (in fact, even with his supernatural revelation we are blind to it apart from his Spirit cf. **1 Cor 2:14–16 ; 2 Cor 4:3–4**). Also, Paul describes his own ministry as one of ‘teaching’ and encouraged Timothy “for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (**1 Tim 4:16; 2:7; 5:17; 2 Tim 1:11; 2:2; 4:2–3**).

2.) The Gospel - The message of salvation without neglecting...

a.) its implications on all of life (shrinking the gospel; **John 14:15**). One way we are particularly tempted to do is by minimizing sin:

“Everybody’s life includes things which cause dissatisfaction and shame. Everyone has a bad conscience about some things past, matters in which he has fallen short of the standard which e set for himself...The danger is that in our evangelism we should content ourselves with evoking thoughts of these things...then depicting Christ as the One who saves us from these elements of ourselves, without even raising the question of our relationship with God.”⁵

b.) OR conflating it with its implications, implying that we are saved by faith + works (**Gal 2:15–16**).

⁴ Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*. 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014), 27.

⁵J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1991), 62.

3.) Aim - Understanding that the evangelism is more than a data transfer, mindlessly passing out academic facts. It is understanding that everyone is headed to eternal life or eternal punishment (**Dan 12:2; Rev 20:11–15**). This, in turn, helps us to know which fights to pick and which ones to avoid.

a.) Example - Lady asking Stiles about whether or not she should go to the Catholic 'christening' for her sister's baby boy (we probably have heard similar questions). After listening to the lady unload her anger over the fact that her sister thought this would "save" her baby, Stiles responded, "I think you should go, but not to support an unbiblical understanding of conversion. I think you should go because you are shooting for a bigger target than just correcting your sister's theological misunderstanding about christening. You should go and be supportive, filled with love, because you long to have a voice to speak into your sister's life with the only way that she *can* be saved...and into your nephew's life down the road, for that matter."⁶

b.) This isn't to say that a believer NEVER takes a stand for truth, but that the ultimate aim of seeing someone saved and having future opportunities to teach them the gospel is more valuable than one relationship-ending rebuke (especially to a non-believer who cannot perceive or accept spiritual truths anyway).

4.) Persuade - This isn't to say that we bring about people's conversion, faith, or repentance, but Paul uses this word in regards to his own evangelism (**2 Cor 5:11; 10:5; cf. Acts 24–26**). If we want people to be saved, we must labor to persuade them, or convince them, that the gospel is true and that they must surrender their life to Christ.

- Why do we need a biblical definition and practice of evangelism? Stiles puts it very pointedly, because "unbiblical evangelism is a method of assisted suicide for a church" and for individuals.

DISCUSS: What are some examples of things people *call* 'evangelism', but isn't actually evangelism? How does this definition help us know the difference?

What Isn't Evangelism? (#1-3)

1.) Imposition - Evangelism is not imposing our beliefs on others.

a.) We must remember the message we are sharing is "not a matter of opinion but a fact" (**1 Cor 15:3-8**) It is no more an imposition than

⁶ Stiles, 35.

how a pilot can tell his passengers that the runway is “here and not there.” Further, the truths of the gospel are not ours, in the sense that they “uniquely pertain to *you* or *your* perspective or experience, or in the sense that you came up with them” (cf. **Gal 1:11–12**).⁷ We did not invent the gospel nor do we have authority to alter it (**Gal 1:8–9**). We simply tell people the good news and what the right response is (**Acts 2:37–38**).

- b.) It is not coercion - A conversation Mark Devers had with a Muslim friend of his brings this to the forefront. His friend, Bilal, pointed out that the problem with Christianity is that it “does not provide answers and guidelines for all of the complexities of real life. It has no overarching social-political pattern to give to society.” However, in response Dever pointed out that this is because Christianity has a realistic view of the human condition. He pointed out that in Islam the problem is only a matter of behavior, and a question of the will. But Christianity acknowledges that human sinfulness is not merely “an aggregate of bad actions but an expression of a bad heart in rebellion against God”, a heart that can only be changed by God Himself, and not by any comprehensive political program. He ended with this, “I could put a sword to a person’s throat and make him a sufficiently good Muslim, but, I said, I can’t make anyone a Christian that way.”⁸

2.) Personal Testimony - Evangelism is not telling others what Jesus has done for *you* (specifically).

- a.) Example: The story of the blind man healed by Jesus and questioned by the Pharisees in (**John 9:13–40**). “The man disregard the menacing threats of those more honored and respected than he in order to give this verbal witness to the power of God...but it’s not evangelism. There was no gospel in it. The man didn’t even know who Jesus was...”⁹ *that is* until Jesus comes to him again and asks “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” and reveals who He is.
- b.) This is a key part of why, as a part of our membership process, we have people clearly write out the good news when they share their testimony! The gospel shouldn’t merely be implicit, but *explicit* so fellow Christians can affirm a new member’s faith and so non-Christians are evangelized even as they hear their friend’s story (cf. **Act 3:11–26** the testimony of the healed man is not enough!).

⁷ Both quotes. Mark Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2007), 70.

⁸ Dever, *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism*, 71.

⁹ Dever, 72.

3.) Social Action and Public Involvement - Evangelism is not participating in or starting a social action program/politics.

- a.) Even the best mercy ministries are *themselves* not the gospel. They may *commend* the gospel (**Matt 5:16**) so people are more willing to listen, but they are not the thing itself.
- b.) “When our eyes fall from God to humanity, social ills replace sin, horizontal problems replace the fundamental vertical problem between us and God, [and] winning elections eclipses winning souls.”¹⁰ While the disciples were definitely concerned with societal ills (ex. **Gal 2:10**), they never conflated that with preaching the gospel (**2:7-9**); in fact, in some cases their preaching created new problems for the society (**Acts 16:19-24 ;19:23-29**).

DISCUSS: How should we respond to these various misunderstandings?

- What if an unbeliever accuses you of “imposing” your beliefs on them?
- OR says “Well, that’s just your experience? Everybody’s is different...”?
- How can we do evangelism through/during a form of social action (like homeless outreach/addiction recovery)?

DEMONSTRATE (5-10 min.): This time YOU share the gospel with another volunteer who pretends to be the unbeliever. Again ask if anyone had any thoughts? Positives/negatives?

CLOSING (5 min.): Next week we’ll have another volunteer give their gospel presentation and discuss. But for now we need to model how important prayer is successfully evangelism:

Ask for a few volunteers to pray over what we learned and that we would have opportunities to begin applying it.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 75.

Session 3 - Evangelism: What, Who, and How? (Part 2)

DEMONSTRATE (same as previous): Ask for two volunteers. One to play the role of the “unbeliever” and another to be the one sharing their faith. Encourage the Christian to practice asking for permission to share first, then have them give their 5-minute gospel presentation. Afterwards, ask if anyone had any thoughts? Positives/negatives?

What Isn't Evangelism? (#4-6)

4.) Apologetics - Evangelism is not defending particular historical truths or doctrines about Christianity.

- a.) Similar to social action, apologetics may create wonderful opportunities for evangelism (perhaps by causing an unbeliever to question a presupposition that is not true) OR “you may just as easily confirm someone in their unbelief by your inability to answer a particular question (that is impossible to answer anyway)...You can easily leave the impression that if *you* don't know how to answer your friends' questions, then you don't really know enough to believe that the Christian gospel is true either.”¹¹
- b.) While Jesus certainly did answer the many questions asked of him (in defense of the truth), he always turned the question to what was *more important*, namely himself (**John 4:19-26; Mark 10:17-21**)

5.) The Results of Evangelism - Evangelism is not the same thing as conversion, baptism, people bearing fruit of repentance, etc.

- a.) “If you combine this misunderstanding with a misunderstanding of the gospel itself (how we are saved), and of what the Bible teaches about conversion, then it is very possible to end up thinking not only that evangelism is seeing others converted, but thinking that it is within our power to do it.”
- b.) What does that mean?
 - i.) If you see someone believe in Christ/“make a decision” for Christ, that is not the same thing as evangelism.
 - ii.) If you urge someone to get baptized, that is not evangelism.
 - iii.) If you urge people to repent of their sins, broadly or specifically, that is not evangelism.
- c.) What is the danger if you do confuse these categories? You may end up using manipulative tactics/focusing all your time on urging people

¹¹ *ibid*, 78.

just to “make a decision”, get baptized, make some behavioral changes and *assume* that therefore evangelism has happened...

6.) Particular ‘Evangelistic’ Methods - Evangelism is not giving an altar call at the end of the service, asking people to raise their hands/stand up, or guiding people through the sinners prayer.

- a.) Many churches feel compelled to give altar calls or utilize one of these other methods to accumulate quick evangelistic ‘numbers’. Yet that doesn’t mean that the gospel was necessarily preached during that message (although we hope it is!).
- b.) Also, these methods are usually subtly manipulative . They rely on the dimming or flashing of lights, the ambiance of music, emotionally charged words, and the peer pressure of those around an unbeliever to convince them to step forward. Why might these methods not be appropriate for those who should speak with “open statement of the truth” to others (**1 Cor 4:1-6**)?
 - i.) Example 1: Stiles tells the story of how he, as a “freshly minted 1970s-era Jesus freak” led his roommate John to Christ. During one invitation at a new church they visited, the preacher called out “If you can’t publicly stand up for Jesus in church, you won’t ever stand up for him outside these walls.” Stuck against this “ironclad” logic they went forward. After sharing that John had just gotten saved, Mack was pressed to rededicate his life to Jesus. Upon sheepishly agreeing the preacher spins around toward the TV and declares “I’d like to say to all of you in TV land, these two young men have come to give their lives to Jesus. [And] you can do that in your home right now...” trailing off. What’s off or wrong about this?
- c.) Furthermore, because a person decides to come forward during one emotionally-charged altar call does not mean that a lasting-heart change has been impressed upon them through the Holy Spirit (more on this later!).
 - i.) Example 2: The powerful testimony of one conversation D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones had with another man. The man was disappointed Jones hadn’t given an altar call after the previous night’s sermon, because if the Dr. had asked him *then* he would have come, but he would not come today when Jones asked. Jones responded “My dear friend, if what happened to you last night does not last for 24 hours I am not interested in it. If you are not as ready to come with me now as you were last night you have not got the right , the true thing. Whatever affected

you last night was only temporary and passing, you still do not see your real need of Christ.”¹²

- d.) The New Testament never shows the apostles using these kinds of techniques. Rather, they pleaded with people, relied on God to change hearts, and left the “ball in their court” (**Acts 16:14; 17:4, 32–34; 26:29**). Even when people didn’t respond initially, they didn’t resort to these methods, but persisted in speaking about Christ!
- e.) NOTE: Yet, as Danny Akin once pointed out at an SBC conference, many pastors who would now reject these methods were still saved in churches that evangelized these ways. “We need to acknowledge that God is sovereign and can do as he wills to bring people to himself” even when the selected evangelistic ‘medium’ is less than desirable.¹³

DISCUSS: How should we respond to these various misunderstandings?

- What if an unbeliever brings up a philosophical/historical question or topic like creationism vs. evolution, or “How can a loving God send people to hell?”, or “Why does God allow evil/terrible things to happen?”
- What should you say if someone claims that 500 people got baptism at an outreach event? Is that evangelism?
- What if someone claims that he or she is a Christian because they “prayed a prayer”? Is this necessarily wrong? What would be a tempered response?

Who should Evangelize?

- **The general answer is obvious: EVERYBODY!** As John Stott points out regarding **Matthew 28:18–20** “[This Great] Commission...is binding upon every member of the whole church...Every Christian is called to be a witness to Christ in the particular environment in which God has placed him. Further, although the public ministry of the Word is a high office, *private witness* or *personal evangelism* has a value which in some respects surpasses even that of preaching, since the message can then be adapted more personally.”

¹²ibid, 80.

¹³Stiles, *Evangelism*, 23.

DISCUSS: What does John Stott mean by saying that the gospel “can be adapted more personally?” Is he telling us to *change* the message of the gospel?! What would be a legitimate and/or an illegitimate way to ‘adapt’ the gospel to a particular unbeliever?

- Ex 1: A person who is concerned about ‘social justice’ movements?
- Ex 2: Someone who has just recently lost a loved one?
- Ex 3: A former soldier who saw lots of combat and death abroad?

- **There is some sense** in which we have passed lightly over Jesus’ words in **Matthew 10:32-33**:
 - “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”
 - What does it mean to deny Jesus before others? Is that merely to verbalize “I do *not* believe”? Or can it be more than that?
 - **NOTE:** This doesn’t mean that true believers do not ever ‘deny’ or refuse to acknowledge Jesus (even Peter did that x3!), Jesus is likely referring to a pattern over the whole of life.
- The testimony of the NT shows us that the apostles and the rest of the disciples took Jesus’ words to heart (**Acts 5:42; 8:25; 13:32; 14:7,15,21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18; also Philem 1:4-6**). The disciple Philip was officially assigned different duties in the church, to help monitor the distribution of food among thousands of believers (**7:3-6**), *but* he clearly did not think that this duty absolved him from his responsibility to preach (**8:26-40**).

CLOSING: Next week will have the workshop exercise will revolve around dealing with these various ‘misunderstandings’, except it will be a group exercise:

How to stick to the gospel when x, y, z happens?

Also don’t forget:

Pray for any opportunities or people that have brought up so far and to apply today’s teaching.

Session 4 - How should we evangelize?

DEMONSTRATE: This time you will play the role of the somewhat “stubborn” unbeliever. Begin by giving one of the objections or “misunderstandings” from the previous lesson and encourage the rest of the group to come up with good ways to steer the conversation back to the gospel.

How should we evangelize?

- Last week, we talked about what evangelism is and isn't. Today we're going to begin talking about *how* we should evangelize.

1.) With Reliance on the Sovereignty of God

- a.) To rely on the sovereignty of God in evangelism is to trust that it is *both* God's prerogative to reach the lost AND only in His regenerative power to do so (**Ezek 36:22-32; 37:1-14; John 6:44; Acts 11:18; Acts 16:14; Rom 8:1-10; 1 Cor 2:10-16; 2 Cor 4:1-6; 5:17-19; Eph 1:4-6; 2:8-9; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3**). This is the first and most valuable thing to have in evangelism.
- b.) **FOIL:** But, some may say, doesn't a belief in God's sovereignty totally preclude evangelism? Aren't they actually in conflict with each other?! Indeed, belief in God's sovereignty is thought to paralyze evangelism by “robbing one both of the motive to evangelize” (creating a “let be and let God mindset”¹⁴) and “of the message to evangelize with” because the preaching of the good news appears unnecessary, and man's choice to trust in Christ appears nonexistent.
- c.) **Response:** NO! Evangelism and God's sovereignty are dear friends that need no reconciliation, in fact the one is necessary for the other.¹⁵ Why? Because [divine sovereignty] “creates the possibility - indeed, the certainty - that evangelism will be fruitful... Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the

¹⁴ Indeed some people have *wrongly* applied God's sovereignty in such a way as with the example of this mission chairmen speaking to would-be missionaries, “Sit down, young men; when God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid, or mine!” As Packer points out, “the idea of taking the initiative in going out to find men of all nations for Christ struck him as improper, and indeed, presumptuous.” Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, Packer, 37.

¹⁵ Rather, we must learn to accept the antinomy (‘apparent’ contradiction) between these two biblical truths and use them in their proper spheres of reference (just as we do with the wave-particle nature of light). As Spurgeon himself responded when asked how he would reconcile these two doctrines: “I wouldn't try... I never reconcile friends.” Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 26.

sun than to preach the Christian gospel,” because of the spiritual inability of man in sin. As Packer says, “Can you or I by our earnest talking break the power of Satan over a man’s life? No. Can you or I give life to the spiritually dead? No... We can preach, and preach clearly and fluently and attractively... [but] unless there is some other factor in the situation, over and above our own endeavors, all evangelistic action is foredoomed to failure.”¹⁶

d.) God’s sovereignty is what enables us to evangelize in *all the ways we’re about to discuss*. Without it, evangelism will “lack staying power”, give up amidst “temporary setbacks”, and become both dishonest and pragmatic. “For it we forget that it is God’s prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them.”¹⁷ Rather, we must pray that God would sovereignly save the lost AND labor diligently because he has called us to be involved in that process (**Rom 10:17; Matt 28:18-20; John 4:35-38**)

2.) With the Scriptures, both Old and New Testament

DISCUSS: What role does/should the Old Testament play in our evangelism? Are there parts of the Old Testament that are particularly relevant or helpful for evangelizing? How did Jesus use the Old Testament to reach the lost?

- a.) Firstly, which testament did Jesus and the apostles use to reach the lost? The Old (they were still living in the New)!
- b.) Let’s look at some examples of how Jesus and then the apostles use the Old Testament in this way (give them the whole list and ONLY DISCUSS 1 in class. Ask the class what they notice in each text? What OT references are included and how are they used?
 - i.) Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:17–26**; we could look at any number of 10 commandment references Jesus makes)
 - ii.) Parable of the Tenants (**Matthew 21:33–46**; speaking allegorically from the treatment of Joseph , cf. **Ps. 118:22, 23**)
 - iii.) How Does David call Him Lord? (**Matthew 22:41–46**; cf. **Ps. 110:1**)
 - iv.) The Bread of Life (**John 6:25–33**)
 - v.) Paul at the Areopagus (**Acts 17:22–31**)
 - vi.) Are Jews Better Off? (**Romans 3:10–18**)
- c.) What are our takeaways?

¹⁶ *ibid*, 104, 107.

¹⁷ *ibid*, 32.

- i.) **First, they used the OT to explain *who* Jesus/God is and *what* he has done (Luke 24:25–27; either typologically from shadows toward substance, direct prophecy, etc.).**
- ii.) **Second, they used the OT, primarily the demands of the law, to explain *why* the *who/what* matters** (this is what the Reformers referred to as the “1st Use of the Law” out of 3 uses; this is regularly employed in Ray Comfort’s evangelism). The law shows us our need for Christ in light of the holiness and wrath of God.

3.) With Honesty

- a.) People must be told to repent and believe and that if they do so they will be saved. “But they will need to repent, and it will be costly. We must be accurate in what we say, not holding any important parts back that seem to us awkward or off-putting.”¹⁸ Following Jesus will require them to:
 - i.) recognize and give up their sins *against God*.¹⁹
 - ii.) suffer on his behalf in some way, shape, form (Phil 1:29).
- b.) Stiles I think appropriately modifies Gilberts model: God, Man, Christ, Response, and **Cost**. The cost of following Jesus cannot be ignored. Here’s one example of how that looked like as Stiles shared the gospel in the town of Magadi, near Ngong, Kenya:

Example: Robert came forward after “What you talked about in there...I would like to have it.” Robert seemed quiet, reflective. I went through the same outline I always go through: God, Man, Christ, Response, Cost. I even asked Robert if he understood the cost...[yet] as we talked it was clear that Robert had heard this before. “Would you like to accept Christ now?” I asked. “Yes”, he said quietly...almost as an afterthought, I asked “Robert, you seem to know most of what it means to become a Christian. What has held you back from accepting Christ in the past?” Robert looked down at the clay. He made circles in the dust with his foot. “My father has told me that if I become a Christian he will beat me. Tonight...I will bleed.” I lifted my hand off his shoulder. It was if someone had just hit *me*. “Well, then...we can wait, you can do it later...maybe it’s not worth it.” No sooner had my hand left his shoulder than I heard God’s voice... “Mack, don’t forget what I did so this young man could come to me.” “Yes, Lord” I [silently] replied. I prayed a simple prayer with Robert. I talked with him about following Christ. I prayed for his father...Then I left.²⁰

¹⁸ Dever, 55.

¹⁹ “*Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sins*. It involves a sense of guilt for particular wrongs done in the sight of God, from which one needs to turn and be rid of them if one is ever to be right with God.” Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, 65

²⁰ There’s also the subsequent encouragement of this story. At a short-term missions banquet years latter the director of the Kenya program got up. “This past summer I was in a small town in the middle of the Rift Valley, called Magadi...I spoke to the Christian group there, and afterwards a young man came up to me if I knew a man with the names Mack and Stiles...’Yes’ I said, ‘I know Mack very well.’ This young man told me his name was Robert. Then he said, Two years ago Mack Stiles was with us. He spoke to us about the Lord and he led me to Jesus. Would

4.) With Urgency

- a.) “They must decide now. They certainly shouldn’t wait until a “better deal” comes along.”²¹ because Christ *is* the only way. Recall the parable of the fig tree (that the master wanted to cut down **Luke 13:6-9**)
- b.) We must remember that the life of man is like “the flower of the field” and a it is a vapor that “appears for a little time and then vanishes” (**Ps. 103:15-16; Js 1:10; 4:14**). One story portrays this particularly well...

Example: D.L Moody, the famous 19th century evangelist, once ended an evangelistic meeting as such “Now, I want you to take that question with you and think it over, and next Sunday I want you to come back and tell me what you are going to do with it.” His song leader, Ira Sankey, sang a hymn , “Today the Savior Calls.” Sometime after the meeting that night, a fire began...before noon the next day, much of Chicago had been destroyed by fire...Perhaps as many as three hundred people were killed...Moody vowed, as a response to this, that he would never again give a congregation a week to think over their need for salvation.” (87) - it often expresses a fear of the demands that would come as the result of a yes, or are hesitant to repent of certain sins.

DISCUSS: At the same time, what might be some of the pitfalls of *over* emphasizing the urgency of the gospel (for example, we may end up pressing for a false profession/choice)? How can we balance these things?

5.) With Joy

- a.) “If I stopped here, we might wind up with some rather grim evangelists. Driven by a careful conscience to be clear about what is condemned and forbidden, and driven by a sense of the brevity of time, we could end up with an intense, forceful practice of evangelism.” BUT “ the truth of this news of a restored relationship with God brings us great joy.”²² (the watchmen of Israel sing for joy at those who bring good news! **Isa 52:7-8; Ps 5:11; 51:12; 126:2**; John the Baptist **Lk 1:14,44**; “good news of great joy” **2:11**; Paul to Jerusalem **Rom 15:32; 1 Thess 2:7-8**)
- b.) You would be hard pressed to find any example of evangelism in the book of Acts, for example, which is not accompanied by great joy, even when that evangelism brought immediate persecution and beatings (**Acts 5:41; 8:8; 39; 13:48, 52; 15:3; 16:34**). It is a sad reality that new converts, mere babes in

you please send greetings to him? Tell him I am still walking with the Lord.” Jeannie continued “This young man is now a leader in the Christian Union in his school and he is a testimony...” Mack Stiles, *Speaking of Jesus: How to Tell Your Friends the Best News They Will Ever Hear* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 177-78.

²¹ *ibid*, 57.

²² *ibid*, 59.

the faith, seem to understand the joy of the good news far more than those who claim to have known him their whole life.

6.) With Contextualization

- a.) Be careful that people actually understand what you're saying when you mention "God", "Christ", "sin", "heaven", "justification" etc. Or else you may get people to say "yes!" to something that they don't understand.....
- b.) Remember that the lost will not naturally understand the things of God. Labor with them patiently "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God...and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:14; cf. 2 Tim 2:24-26).
- c.) Work to speak appropriately to each circumstance and group of people, "becoming all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:20-22) and in doing so removing 'debris' that prevents the communication of the gospel (consider Paul in Athens Acts 17:22-34)

Quotation from Athanasius: *"Thus the Word condescended to man's engrossment in corporeal things, by even taking a body. All man's superstitions He met halfway; whether men were inclined to worship Nature, Man, Demons, or the dead, He showed Himself Lord of all these...For as a kind teacher who cares for His disciples, if some of them cannot profit by higher subjects, comes down to their level, and teaches them at any rate by simpler courses; so also did the Word of God....So, men as they were, and human in all their thoughts, on whatever objects they fixed their senses, there they saw themselves met half-way, and taught the truth from every side. 4. For if they looked with awe upon the Creation, yet they saw how she confessed Christ as Lord; or if their mind was swayed toward men, so as to think them gods, yet from the Saviour's works, supposing they compared them, the Saviour alone among men appeared Son of God; for there were no such works done among the rest as have been done by the Word of God. 5. Or if they were biassed toward evil spirits, even, yet seeing them cast out by the Word, they were to know that He alone, the Word of God, was God, and that the spirits were none. 6. Or if their mind had already sunk even to the dead, so as to worship heroes, and the gods spoken of in the poets, yet, seeing the Saviour's resurrection, they were to confess them to be false gods, and that the Lord alone is true, the Word of the Father, that was Lord even of death."*²³

7.) With One Another in Community

- a.) Not only is it a lot easier to do evangelism with other believers, it's also the more common practice in the bible. Whether its Jesus sending out the disciples two by two (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1), the apostles together at Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter and John together in the temple (Acts 3:11), Peter and the apostles before the high priest (Acts 5:29-32), Peter and John being sent to Samaria (Acts 8:14), or Saul and Barnabas being sent off (Acts 13:3;

²³ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*.

as well as their various other companions). Remember Jesus said told the 12 that “you [all] will be my witnesses in Jerusalem” (**Acts 1:8**) = the testimony of Christ is best carried by many witnesses!

- b.) However, usually when we think about evangelism in community we think of evangelistic programs, but these are arguably NOT the most effective way to do evangelism. Sadly there are too many stories of churches with very large programs that draw countless seekers but see next to nobody come to Christ.²⁴ “The fact is, most people come to faith through the influence of family members, small-group Bible studies, or a conversation with a friend after a church service: Christians intentionally talking about the gospel.” (45).
- c.) This ‘method’ of evangelism is best described by Mack Stiles term: a culture of evangelism, which is what we will talk about *next week*.

8.) With Availability

- a.) At the end of the matter, if we do not make time for evangelism, it simply will not happen. We must seriously ask ourselves whether God or anyone else, just by looking at our schedule, would be able to say that we really care about evangelism? And if we do not, then can we claim that we truly believe the claims of the gospel.

CLOSING: This week’s challenge is twofold: to have a conversation (just saying “Good morning/evening” doesn’t count!) with an unbeliever (whether at work over lunch, or with a neighbor you see outside. You don’t have to share the gospel with them *yet*, just focus on asking questions this time. Try and find out what drives them, where they come from, how they grew up, their hopes and dreams. If you can work your faith into the conversation naturally. The two-fold nature of the challenge is in the fact that you need to actually *carve* out availability into your schedule to see and talk to this person.

Be ready to share how it goes next week.

²⁴ The church Easter pageant example. All programs like these are like sugar for churches, they’re addictive and tasty, but they take away a desire for healthier food and over a long period of time make you flabby and could even kill you. Stiles, *Evangelism*, 43-46.

Session 5 - What is a culture of evangelism?

SHARE: Talk about the previous week's experiences conversing with unbelievers. What went well? What didn't? Did you have an opportunity to thread Jesus into the conversation? Did you take that opportunity? Why or why not? How did the other person respond?

What is a culture of evangelism?²⁵

- **a culture motivated by the love of Jesus** - 'We love because he first loved us (**Matt 9:36; 2 Cor 5:14-15; 1 John 3:1, 16-18, 4:9-12, 16-19**)
- **a culture motivated by love for Jesus and His gospel** (**John 14:15, 21, 23-24; Col 4:3; 1 John 2:5**) - having been loved by Jesus we now express our love for Jesus by joyfully sharing the good news, the treasure he has blessed us with.
- **a culture that is confident in the gospel/Jesus** (**Mark 8:38; Lk 9:26; Rom 1:16**) - in observing one parachurch ministry that had fallen into lukewarmness one man commented "I wonder when they lost their confidence in the gospel...I mean, at what point did they start trusting gimmicks and worldly methods rather than the plain message of the gospel?" (49) People will always tell Christians that the modern world has made the gospel irrelevant, and often Christians cave to that pressure. We simply feel that we no longer have anything to offer people.
 - "The Gospel is Not Just the Diving Board, It's the Pool" (Greear ch. 3)
- **a culture that understands the dangers of entertainment** (**Ezek 33:30-32; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Tim 4:3-4**) , people go to hear as if he were a "lusty singer" or a great musical performer...what is on these people's minds is not obedience to God, but sex, money, etc. ("desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes and the pride of life")
- **a culture that sees people clearly** (**2 Cor 5:16a**) - how easy it is to regard people based on sexist, racist, or other superficial views. "We tend to forget that those around us are flesh-and-blood people with real hurts, dreams, struggles, and loves." (51) *This is one key reason why our exercise this week involves simply spending more time with unbelievers.*
 - "We Seek to Live Multicultural Lives, Not Just Host Multicultural Events" (Greear ch. 10). Greear's point is not that we have 'token' ethnic people, or become "seeker-sensitive", but that we see all people as those who need Christ and reach out to them in a way that welcomes rather than discludes them. (even if that sometimes makes us uncomfortable).

²⁵ Stiles, *Evangelism*; as well as J. D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015).

- **a culture that pulls together as one (Phil 1:3-5)** - Have you heard someone say “evangelism is not my gift” as if that excused him from sharing his faith? “That’s a kindergarten understanding of evangelism. All Christians are called to share their faith “as a point of faithfulness, not gifting” (**Matt 28:19; Acts 8:4**)
 - “Everyone is Called” the only question is “Where/How” (Greear ch. 4)
- **a culture that models and trains people in evangelism (1 Cor 4:14-17; Phil 3:17; 2 Tim 2:2)** - where older more experienced Christians share and model the insight and knowledge that younger Christians need to be next-generation ‘leaders’.
 - “A Church is Not a Group of People Gathered Around a Leader, But a Leadership Factory” (Greear ch.6)
- **a culture in which people who are sharing their faith are celebrated (Phil 2:19-22; Acts 18:24-28)** “there is nothing so discouraging as feeling that a church is more interested in manning the nursery than sharing the faith.”²⁶ **NOT** that we shouldn’t celebrate those people, we definitely should! but we shouldn’t forget what’s weightier; in fact, we should celebrate even those who “fail miserably” when they try to evangelize, even “evangelistic failure is better than not trying evangelism at all.”
- **a culture that knows how to affirm and celebrate life (Col 1:3-4,7)** - affirm new believers! don’t elevate them inappropriately, but don’t ignore them either. the “Hallelujah” (Praise God we’re excited!) and “We’ll see” (if you continue to bear fruit) response.
- **a culture doing ministry that feels risky and is dangerous (Phil 1:12-13; cf. 2 Cor 10:5).** Risky in what sense?
 - Relies on God and His resources, not ours (that is, we should live in such a way that we cannot ‘succeed’ unless God shows up; consider the life of George Muller)
 - Confronts Culture. Mostly that means disregarding what people think of us” (59; cf. Stephen in Acts 6:8-8:1)
 - Makes Wise Investments (Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30; balance this with the first one).
 - “Risk is Right” (Greear ch. 11).
- **a culture that understands that the church is the chosen and best method for evangelism (Acts 2:46-47)** - This one runs through the others(60-61).
 - “The Point in Everything is To Make Disciples” (Greear ch. 8, also ch. 1), paraphrasing Greear, God didn’t make a church and give it the task of making disciples, he wanted to make disciples so he made the church.

²⁶ Stiles, 56.

DISCUSS: According to the above 'rubric' (either Stiles points or Greear's plumb-lines), how does our church do? What are areas of strength and weakness? How can we improve? More specifically:

- What might be some risks we should take?
- Who are some youth that we need to disciple?
- Do we have a clear vision for the culture we want? How could it be clearer?
- Do we "make disciples" out of the lost? Or do we "collect disciples" from those who wander about?
- When was the last time we celebrated a conversion/baptism/testimony?

How does the principle of evangelism worked out in the church?

- **loving one another (John 13:35)** - Are you regularly loving the members/visitors to your church in a way that imitates the love of Christ? (i.e at cost to yourself **John 15:13**)
- **being unified (John 17:20-21)** - Divisions in the church body are one of the quickest ways to lose unbelievers interests and to slow evangelism to a halt. Instead of overly critiquing what your church is/isn't doing, how can you step up, step in, and be a part of the evangelism that IS happening?
- **the built in things (by God) that proclaim the gospel** - baptism, lord's supper, prayer, worship, financial giving to further the mission, and preaching
- **"a culture of evangelism is grassroots, not top-down"** understand the main point of the church is to be the church. the churches duty is not to run programs, but to cultivate the culture. AND "when you bring your friend from the community into church, everyone is 'on-game', you are all reaching out. That's a culture of evangelism. It's NOT just about being friendly, though that needs to happen, but having a deep awareness that we are in this together."²⁷

²⁷ ibid., 65–66.

DISCUSS: Use the following as a scenario. At a members meeting, someone stands up and says the following: "Many hispanic people are moving into the community around our church; what is the church going to do to reach out to them?"

Q: (1) What is good/positive about this question?

(2) What may be negative about a question phrased this way?

(3) How would you answer the question?

A: (1) It shows that this person is watching for opportunities for evangelism and felt some responsibility for making it happen.

(2) It implies that the responsibility of reaching these people falls to the 'church' (which usually just means the pastor) and not to the person who noticed the opportunity - may display a misunderstanding of the church's mission.

(3) A good response could include: a reminder that it isn't the best for the church to set up 'outreach programs', but for the individuals with the opportunity to imagine how they can reach out (ex. learn from their culture w/ language, food, daily struggles)

Q: What may result from this type of thinking?

A: Accusations that others "do not really care" about this community, or division/frustration in the church w/ leadership.

- We need to understand WHAT the church is, WHAT the church does, the MISSION of the church. If we're off by even a 'couple of degrees', we can end up in another 'country.'
- The local Church is
 - ... *an organized congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant, observing the ordinances of Christ, having the offices of elders and deacons, exercising the gifts, rights, privileges, and responsibilities given them by His Word* (GCC Statement of Faith)
 - God's plan for evangelism, making disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded.
- **Understanding this** reminds us that "there is a different priority for the church and for the individual. Something you should do in evangelism personally might not be the best thing for the church to do as a whole."²⁸ For example, members wanting to distribute Christmas gift boxes to poor people can be a great idea...until doing so keeps the elders of the church (who get roped into helping) from fulfilling their ministry: preaching the word of God and prayer (Acts 6:3-4).

²⁸ ibid, 73.

CLOSING: This week, foremost:

(1) try to find a new way to reach out/relate to someone around you

It doesn't have to be fancy. Make and distribute a desert (like cookies) your neighbors will like, ask if an elderly neighbor needs help on any projects, try greeting a neighbor from another country in their native language and asking them to tell you more about their culture , invite a co-worker or a church visitor out for lunch/dinner, OR BETTER YET invite them to any church function!

If anyone asks why you are doing this, **do not be shy!** Perhaps say:

“Well, on one level I’m just trying to be a good neighbor, but more importantly I want to share the good news about Jesus with those around me. What do you know/believe about Jesus?”

OR at a church function,

“Did you understand why we did such and such? (communion, baptism, prayer, reflecting on scripture, outreach event)”

Explain the gospel from the situation you’re in.

(2) find a way to include the church in your evangelistic effort.

Alert fellow members of any opportunities you have or people you want to talk to and ask for prayer (remember we need God to act!). See if a member with a bigger home is willing to host a meal or bible study you can invite such a person over to. Ask if another member who speaks a foreign language better is willing to spend time with you and this person. The ideas are endless.

Session 6 - Why don't we Evangelize?

SHARE: Share any opportunities that people may have had the last week to reach out to someone. Did they get a chance to share the gospel/bring Jesus into the conversation? Any examples of a healthy "culture of evangelism" you've seen in the church this last week? (**reread the bullet points**) Anything we could do better?

Why don't we Evangelize?

- Dever correctly points out "if you're anything like me, you're probably not quite so blunt about your failures in evangelism. You've altered your mental records. In fact, even at the time you are not witnessing, you're busy spinning, justifying, rationalizing, and explaining to your conscience why it was really wise and faithful and kind and obedient *not* to share the gospel with a particular person at that time and in that situation."²⁹
- We don't have time to address every evangelistic 'excuse' we use in this class but some basic ones include:
 - 1.) **"I don't know their language"** - Ever since the Tower of Babel this has been one of the most legitimate excuses we can imagine! But we are still able to learn to work with another language or keep bibles around in other languages (I feel this one right now with my neighbors!)
 - 2.) **"Evangelism is illegal."** - None of us here are in that position! But many in the world live in countries where darkness reigns and social pressure/laws/jails/guns threaten them away from evangelism.
 - 3.) **"Evangelism could cause problems at work."** - Evangelism during work hours could reduce productivity, or cause other issues for our employers. We certainly don't want that to happen or to bring the gospel into disrepute.
 - 4.) **"Other things seem more urgent."** - There are always a million things vying for our attention. The job has to be done, bills need paid, calls must be returned, emails sent, grocery shopping finished, etc. etc. etc.
 - 5.) **"I don't know non-Christians."** - Some of our challenges have already aimed at dealing with this issue. Naturally, some of our jobs (like a pastor's) may insulate us more from meeting nonbelievers, and as Christians we want to have lots of meaningful time in Christian community.

The one we'll discuss today which usually ties together or underlies these other ones is our "fear of man." That is to ask...

²⁹ Dever, 19

What do you do when the person you've shared the Gospel with doesn't react the way you had hoped? That is, how do you deal with rejection?

- Now, foremost, there are a lot of reasons we can get rejected. For being jerks, for instance. For not letting up when someone has asked us to. For treating people poorly. For not listening to them. For being manipulative. For sinning against them. For being recklessly provocative. This morning when we talk about rejection, we are talking about getting rejected as a result of our witness for Christ in relationships with people God has put around us.

Before going any further lets lay out a hypothetical for our discussion (could even print this out for people to consider):

After praying for God to give you a passion for evangelism, that he would lay on your heart people around you who need to hear the gospel. After asking for opportunities to share with people at work, or in your neighborhood, or in your family. After doing all of that, you finally step out in faith, in confidence -- sure, with some nervousness, but trusting God nevertheless -- and you begin to engage, to think strategically about sharing the Gospel.

You begin to engage with...

- *your unbelieving co-worker with whom you've worked on lots of projects and always sit beside in meetings and sometimes grab a beer with after work and generally enjoy being around and even occasionally talk to about your personal life and about your favorite British rock bands ...*
- *your unbelieving parents, the two people that you know and love more than anybody in the world and whom you are certain know you and would take a bullet for you in a heartbeat ...*
- *your unbelieving child, the human being whom you brought into the world and served and supported and made sacrifices for throughout elementary school and high school and college ...*
- *your unbelieving neighbors, the couple you feel comfortable having over for dinner and whom you went to see at the hospital when they got sick and let borrow your car when their ride was in the shop and with whom you share an affinity for congressional politics or football or gardening or travel ...*
- *your closest friends, the person who is part of so many of your sweetest memories, the person who was there for you in the hard days following a breakup or a career disappointment, the person who knows you like a sister or brother and in front of whom you hold little to nothing back ...*

Before long, you are sharing the Gospel, sharing with them about how God made us to love and worship and live for him but instead of doing that we've all rebelled against him and lived as if we were God. You point to evidences of that in the world today, and then you point to Christ, how he was sent into the world to die for us as a sacrifice for sinners, and then raised. You tell them they can be forgiven of their sins and made right with God if only they will repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ.

In your heart, you are praising God. He has answered your prayer. He has given you the chance to share the Gospel, but your joy is soon interrupted by what follows. In the ensuing days, your

co-worker begins avoiding you in the office and talking about you behind your back. Your parents get up from the table and storm out of the room. Your child laughs at you and begins coming around less and less. Your neighbor puts a finger in your face and says don't ever talk to me about that again. When the bowl game rolls around, the game you always watched at their house, there is no invitation this year. "You have a lot of nerve," your best friend says -- and when you bring up the gospel again, and again, you see them mentally turn off. In pictures on Facebook you start to see other faces where your face used to be. And on and on.

*You feel almost unbearably let down. Perhaps you feel abandoned. Perhaps you even, in the back of your mind, silently wish you'd never opened your mouth to begin with. After all, weren't things better, or at least more enjoyable, more comfortable before? **Why is this happening, you wonder?** Are you just an awful evangelist? What does it mean that the people you love the most, and whom you always thought loved you the most -- what does it mean when those people reject the gospel, and seem to reject you because of it?*

So having laid out a series of hypothetical situations that are, in reality, not that hypothetical, lets answer a couple of questions regarding rejection and end on some encouragements.

Why do people reject the gospel? We must remember...

- 1.) People do not reject the gospel because of the we did not 'present' it well enough** - There are things that are not evangelism because they do not include the whole gospel (as we discussed), but when all components are present, and people still reject us, it is not fundamentally because of our stuttering, it is not because we cannot answer their impossible questions, it is not because it was "not the right time."
- 2.) God is the One who Saves** - "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." (**John 6:44**) and again "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." (**John 6:65**)
- 3.) The Hearts of Sinners are Hard and Spiritually Dead.** We are responsible for sharing his good news, but He is the one who saves. We are all sinners who have actively broken God's commands and lived in opposition to him – including our unbelieving friends, family, coworkers, and even children – and as a result we all have had our hearts hardened against God. because of it.

That all being said, I want to leave us with some encouragements and actions we should take in the face of gospel rejection & persecution:

- 1.) Be comforted...because those persecuted for the gospel are blessed.**
 - a.) "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are

blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Pet 4:12–14) - Blessed because God is more glorified.

- b.) “Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you...because they do not know him who sent me.” (John 15:20–21) - Blessed because it is what happened to our Savior.
- c.) Remembering the example of Noah, recalling that only “a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet 3:20–21) - Blessed because rejections will not last forever (even as Noah’s generation rejected him), and God will prove his faithfulness to you.

2.) Be merciful...because we have been shown mercy.

- a.) See how Peter learned from the example of Jesus. “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (1 Peter 2:23-24)
- b.) Since Jesus has bore our insults/sins to save us, how can we do any less to those who reject us now?

3.) Be available...because rejection isn’t always forever.

- a.) Yes, while it may be wise for a time after someone rejects the Gospel to take a step back and not bring it up for a while (especially if they explicitly ask you not to), that does not mean we will never have another chance....
- b.) But only as occasion requires! We are to continue living holy lives around them, lives that give credence to our gospel claims. We should forgive them, pray for them, and be available in case something happens to make them reconsider Christ.

4.) Be hopeful...because we don’t know how God will use our evangelism.

- a.) I will share a bit of a personal testimony here. There is a man named Paul Washer who is the president of HeartCry Missionary Society. When Paul was a young man, spending lengthy amounts of time doing missions in the mountains of Peru, he preached a powerful sermon to a large group of youth. That sermon (given in love) was full of difficult gospel truths calling out ‘false converts’ who may have been on the road to hell. It also included some heavy doses of youthful aggression and fiery rhetoric. Paul Washer quickly became ostracized from the larger evangelical community and was never invited to

that conference again. In some interviews he expressed his deep sadness that he squandered that chance to see people saved because of his own weakness. That sermon was given in 2002...

- b.) Thirteen years later I listened to that sermon in my bedroom the first week February 2015...three days later, under the conviction of the Scriptures and brother Paul's words I was converted. Since then I have heard of almost a dozen other young men who were converted because of brother Paul's faithful, yet imperfect, evangelism, and are faithfully following Jesus to this day. We simply do not know what God's plan is to reach the lost.
- c.) There is also the story of Jim Elliot ("He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.") who with his friends was murdered by an unreached group of Huarani Indians in Ecuador in 1956. His death and words have inspired countless waves of missionaries to continue his work –including his own wife and children – who returned to that tribe and were able to see many of those people come to faith in Jesus, including one of his murderers.

5.) Be prayerful...because God hears his children.

- a.) It is not a copout answer to pray for someone, it is a valiant act of love. Prayers soften both our hearts and those of the lost. They challenge us in our weaknesses, and remind us that we are incapable of doing what only God can.
- b.) Mack Stiles tells the story of one exchange student friend of his had named Kelly. These friends attended a gospel-centered church and regularly prayed for Kelly and took her to church, although she didn't seem remotely interested, but these friends became dear to Kelly and stayed in touch when she left to return home to Brazil. The mother, Connie, prayed for Kelly for over 15 years. She shared with Mack's wife that Kelly was now a flight attendant with Emirates Airlines and asked if she (Leann) would get in touch with her during a lonely time of her life. They wrote Kelly and told her about Mack's church and Kelly began attending immediately. Her heart was warmed listening to the preaching and she told Leann she wanted to become a member. Leann told her that she needed to understand the gospel to become a member. "Oh, then tell me this gospel," said Kelly. Across multiple continents, churches, various cities, languages, ethnicities, personalities, and years of prayer, the gospel finally penetrated Kelly's heart. She now works at that church's welcome team with the express purpose of helping those who do not know God. It is impossible in my estimation to conclude that every single prayer of God's beloved daughter Connie did not play an integral role in the Lord eventually saving Kelly.

CLOSING: This week, instead of challenging you all to go talk to someone, you're challenged to do some self-reflection and be ready to share next week:

Ask yourself:

- Who are you most afraid of sharing the gospel with and why?
- Have you been rejected because of the gospel before? What happened?
How has that affected you?
- Which of the encouragements or challenges from class do you struggle with doing the most? Long-term praying? Being merciful to your rejecter?
- What kind of 'excuses' come to your mind when you think of evangelizing?

Session 7 - Why should we Evangelize?

SHARE: Open up the room to share some of their fears/excuses/rejection stories in regards to evangelism. Be encouraging! Point people back to the truths we discussed last week.

Why should we Evangelize?

- Up to this point, we've talked about what evangelism is and what it isn't (addressing common misconceptions - [feel free to ask review questions on these](#)),

1.) To Glorify God (1 Cor 10:31; John 17:2-3)

- a.) Perhaps the hardest and the most key motivation. This is ultimate reason for which Christ came (John 17) and for which we were made (Isa 43:7), yet it is the motivation which our wicked and selfish hearts are most apt to reject or forget. Regardless of the outcome, of whether people give us a positive or negative response, we proclaim the gospel because it is the greatest revelation of God's glory and those that know and love God desire for his worth to be magnified in the world.
- b.) "We glorify God by evangelizing, not only because evangelizing is an act of obedience, but also because in evangelism we tell the world the great things God has done for the salvation of sinners."³⁰

2.) Out of a Desire to be Obedient (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 3:15)

- a.) It is surprising how often in the New Testament one of the first acts of obedience new believers took (outside of baptism) was testifying to the work of Christ (Mark 5:19; man at the pool John 5:15; Paul in Acts 9:20 "immediately he proclaimed Jesus..."; the Philippian jailer Acts 16:27-33;
- b.) It is the first command of the risen Christ in Matthew (28:18-20). The fundamental command in regards to seeing God build his kingdom (Acts 1:6-8). The first command believers carried out wherever they went (Acts 8:4; Acts 11:19-21; 13:5, 15-16; 14:1; etc.).

3.) Love for the Lost (Matt 9:36; Rom 10:1; Gal 6:10; 1 John 4:7-21)

- a.) We who have been loved by God, biblically, love those around us by telling them of that one who fulfills their greatest need (salvation from sin/God's wrath) and offers them their greatest good (eternal life with Christ).
- b.) We must pity, lament, and grief the state of the lost (which we know personally) as Christ did (Matt 9:36; 23:37-39; cf. Ezek 18:32; 33:11; Jonah

³⁰ Packer, 76.

4:10–11) and as Paul (Rom 10:1; cf. 9:1–5; 11:13–14); then, we must do all we can to share with them their only hope.³¹

- c.) If we do not truly love the lost, they will quickly and rightfully dismiss us as hypocrites who do not ourselves understand the depth of our own sinfulness, the terror of God’s wrath in hell, and the treasure of Christ’s forgiveness.
- d.) “As I seek to [prod unbelievers], I need to remind myself constantly that this is not a game I am playing. If I begin to enjoy it as a kind of intellectual exercise, then I am cruel and can expect no real spiritual results. As I push the man off his false balance, he must be able to feel that I care for him. Otherwise I will only end up destroying him..”³²

4.) To Better Know Christ (Philemon 6)

- a.) As Paul prays for these brothers and sisters “that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” (Phlm 6)
- b.) That is to say, for us to have a “full knowledge” of the good things that Christ has given us, of all that He has done and will do for us, to fully know and enjoy those things we *must* share our faith. Without it, there is something that Christ offers us of Himself that we are missing out on.

CLOSING: Since this is the last class, open up the room for questions and comments. Ask the following questions of attendees, “Has this C.C...”

- 1.) ...helped clear up any misunderstandings of evangelism you had?
- 2.) ...convicted you in your present practice of evangelism?
- 3.) ...provided answers for how to deal with particular evangelistic dilemmas?
- 4.) ...led you to reaching out/trying to share Jesus with someone who you otherwise wouldn’t have?
- 5.) ...given you a deeper knowledge of Christ and the gospel in your life?

Try to leave a little extra time to pray for those you know, any opportunities you have to evangelize, and the church.

Commit to continuing the efforts begun in this class, praying regularly for the lost (like on Wednesday nights), and cultivating a better culture of evangelism.

³¹ Newman, *Questioning Evangelism*, 215.

³²“Similarly some followers of Jesus have mistaken Stoicism for Christian maturity... Their trust in God’s sovereignty and their confidence in Christ’s return put everything neatly in place for them. They don’t get upset or angry... They just “praise the Lord”, knowing that they won’t get left behind... Neither Paul nor Jesus made such mistakes. They saw idolatry and lostness around them and were moved to distress - even tears. Without such anguish, we fail to reflect godliness and wholeness to a godless, fractured world. If Jesus wept and Paul groaned, we should do more than sigh or sneer.” Newman, Randy. *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People’s Hearts the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 120.

Evangelism Core Course : Reflection

As we close our class time together, I encourage you to reflect using the five categories of doctrine we've used as our guiding principles and some of the passages of Scripture we have returned to time and again...

Scripture Suggestions: **Matthew 5:14-16; 28:18-20; John 6:25-65; 9:35-41 Acts 1:6-8; 4:23-31; Romans 10:14-17; 1 Cor 1:18-2:16; 2 Cor 4:1-6; 5:11-21; Philemon 4-7**

How has the class material, instruction, discussion, and application helped you:

- I. ...to cope with and make sense of the vast, complex, and seemingly chaotic reality we find ourselves in today and live out our God-given role in it?

- II. ...to celebrate God for who He is and what He has done by truthful and spiritual speaking about Him?

III. ...to communicate who the Triune God is, what He has done, and how He wills us to live before Him to those in and outside the church?

IV. ...to discern and criticize false witness and lies about God and His work we come across in our day to day lives?

V. ...to continue to live out our place individually and collectively in God's redemptive mission in the world?

**Is there anybody that you have shared the gospel with since beginning this class?
How did they respond? If they rejected the gospel, how did you handle that? If they
showed interested, what next steps did you/can you take? How can you draw others
in the local church alongside you for this?**

In this class, we argued for a culture of evangelism that:

- **that is motivated by the love of Jesus**
- **that is motivated by love for Jesus and His gospel that is confident in the gospel/Jesus**
- **that understands the dangers of entertainment**
- **that sees people clearly**
- **that pulls together as one**
- **that models and trains people in evangelism**
- **that celebrates people who are sharing their faith**
- **that knows how to affirm and celebrate life**
- **that feels risky and is dangerous**
- **that understands that the church is the chosen and best method for evangelism**

How is our church doing in these areas? How has this class, in your opinion, contributed to growth in any of the above? How is your life reflecting these values?
