

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Evangelism Vision Paper

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of the requirements for the completion of the course

EVAN 525 (D20)

Contemporary Evangelism

by

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Lessons Learned

This course and the book *Worship and Witness* as challenged me as a Christian, as a husband, as a father, and as a person in general. This course has also caused me to reflect deeply on my preconceptions about evangelism, sharing my faith, and how Christ expects his followers to live their life. First, I have come to learn that evangelism is not just a specific act that we as Christians “do”, rather it is to actually be way of life for followers of Christ. Evangelism is “a way of living the gospel so that we constantly show our love for and commitment to Jesus...”¹

While I consciously knew this was the case, I now more fully understand that evangelism is a commandment from God. Jesus commanded his followers, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20a).”² What is so impactful is the *why* behind Christ’s Great Commission. Ultimately, this is an act of love. I think in one sense, sharing the Gospel with someone is one of the greatest acts of love that we can offer. Christ said, “If you love me, keep my commands (John 14:15).” Our love for Christ should compel us to share our faith with others. But more importantly, our love for others should also compel us to share our faith with them. In short, if we as Christians really believe what we say—those who have not put their faith in Christ are doomed to be separated from God in hell for all eternity—then we should be sharing our faith at every opportunity. Unfortunately, and in a moment of complete transparency, I realized and admit I have failed miserably at this thus far in my life.

¹ David Wheeler and Vernon M. Whaley, *The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 103.

² Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

Another important lesson I have learned is that evangelism involves more than just “doing good” and acts of service. I have often heard what I now understand to be a complete misquotation attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words when necessary.” I think Christians, myself included, have used this misquote as an excuse to do good works, but not actually share our faith with people. We have the mistaken impression that by simply being kind, helping others, and doing “good works”, non-believers will some how figure out we are followers of Jesus and want to do the same. This is simply false. We cannot allow ourselves to use ‘the “I lived it in front of them” excuse.’³ Certainly, acts of service can lead to opportunities to share our faith. But we must not simply stop at acts of service. We must take the time to look for opportunities to share our faith verbally. We must tell the “story” of Christ to others, and “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have (1 Peter 3:15b).”

Finally, an important technique I have learned to apply to evangelism is the art of ask questions. I have been a student of Christian Apologetics for several years. I first learned the concept of asking questions from the book *Tactics in Defending the Faith* by Greg Koukl. In this book, Koukl teaches how to use questions to gather information, expose flaws in thinking, and help others think more carefully about what they believe. Yet, I never thought about using questions as a direct way of starting spiritual conversations. I think this is one of the most important skills we can use in evangelism.

Personal Vision and Changes

When I started my journey of going back to Liberty University to complete a Masters Degree in Theology, I did have an idea that this was something that would help further a vision

³ Will McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 43.

that God had given me to become a more effective ambassador and increase my knowledge in the area of Christian apologetics. This book (and this entire class) has completely solidified that vision for me. I believe I can use my talents and abilities for God's glory by becoming a public speaker, teacher, and writer in the area of apologetics. One of my favorite Christian speakers apologists, J. Warner Wallace, has often said, "We don't need any more million dollar apologists, we need a million one-dollar apologists." His point is we can be effective ambassadors and evangelist for the kingdom right where we are. I think there are several key areas at which I can excel in this.

Wheeler and Whaley describe evangelism as "relational" and that our primary "vertical" relationship should be with God.⁴ However, equally as important as our relationship with God are our "horizontal relationships" with both believers and non-believers.⁵ I am blessed to be married to a wonderful Christian wife, Joyce. I have two daughters and a stepson who profess a faith in Christ. It is vital that I continue to grow as a strong spiritual leader for my family. It is very important that I develop a vision for family, especially my youngest daughter. She fifteen, and is struggling with typical concerns of teenagers. I understand how important it is for me to be a strong example of a Christ-like father for her and also help her grow in her own faith. Several months ago, my wife, daughter, and I started discussing the idea of hosting a foreign exchange student. We will be hosting a young lady from Moldova in August of this year. According to her bio, Victoria is a Christian of Eastern Orthodox tradition. This will also be an opportunity for me to be a spiritual leader for her as she lives with us over the next year. To this end, my goal is to engage my immediate family on spiritual issues on a regular basis. We

⁴ Wheeler and Whaley, *Worship and Witness*, 70-71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

occasionally have discussions about Biblical and spiritual topics at dinner; I need to be more intentional about these discussions.

I have recognized the need to continue my own personal development and my walk with Christ. It is comforting to know that “God is glorified when He sees His work grow and develop in our lives.”⁶ While I have realized how little I know, I also know that perfect knowledge is not necessary for effective evangelism. The Bible gives us many examples of how God used imperfect people to accomplish his perfect will. I understand that I simply have to be willing to let God use me for his purposes. To that end, I have the goal to continue to read and study the Bible, and augment Bible study with continued study of both popular and scholarly level books and journal articles on theology and apologetics topics.

Future Action

The Wheeler and Whaley book has impacted me significantly on several future plans I will take to become a more effective evangelist and ambassador for Christ. First, in conjunction with the changes I mentioned above, I will be more intentional and focused on my family’s spiritual development. This is vitally important, and I recognize and fully embrace God’s command that I be the spiritual leader of my house. This means that I must take upon myself the responsibility to spend more time in prayer and more time studying God’s Word. I also will begin having regular Bible study and discussion times with my family. In their book *Family to Family*, Jerry Pipes and Victor Lee share two scenarios of family worship and Bible study where one family begrudgingly endures a session with dad reading scripture and another where dad incorporates a scripture lesson into the normal conversation around the dinner table.⁷ I was very

⁶ Wheeler and Whaley, *Worship and Witness*, 51.

⁷ Jerry Pipes and Victor Lee, *Family to Family: Leaving a Lasting Legacy* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999), 58-59.

impressed with this example, and I have a goal to incorporate the latter type of teaching into our family's normal routine. This will involve getting into the habit of having conversations around the dinner table; in the car while traveling; and regularly looking for opportunities to turn off the television, step away from the computer, and just talk as a family. This will help build my wife and daughters spiritually, and will help me become more effective in my own role as the spiritual head of my family.

I have long felt that I have the gift of teaching. For a time, when my family and I lived in Virginia, help teach a youth group at our church. I frequently give technical presentations through my work as an information security professional, and have spoken in many different forums and formats in front of large audiences. I have a strong interest in teaching both in my local church and possibly in a more formal university setting. I plan to seek opportunities to speak at local churches and organizations on the topic of apologetics. I believe my interest in apologetics is a way to serve fellow believers and can certainly lead to evangelism opportunities. While many Christians have a passion for Christ, some are not effective sharing their faith because of the fear of not being able to answer questions or challenges. I cringe when I hear or read a Christian who is uninformed or gives poor answers when answering challenges or questions. I want to help educate my fellow believers on the wealth of strong evidence for our Christian convictions. I believe this also has the effect of strengthening others convictions. In the future, I am hopeful I may have opportunities to also speak in non-Christian settings.

Finally, a more long-term future plan I am considering is writing a book. I have several ideas, and will have to see where God leads me to this end. There are many wonderful books by Christian authors. I do not want to simply repackage or rewrite existing material and topics. I plan on carefully and prayerfully considering an area or topic where there is a real need. As

mentioned previously, I have a passion for apologetics. I expect I would develop ideas in this arena; but I am certainly open to where the Holy Spirit leads me.

As time goes on, I am certain these goals and visions will change. But at this point in my personal walk with God, my professional life, and my educational journey in pursuing a Masters degree, these goals are where I strongly feel God is leading me.

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