

2012 Camp Hill Evangelism Series
Part 7 “Becoming All Things For All Men”
By Doug Hamilton

In the last lesson on evangelism we covered the importance of myths concerning the lost. Our inaccurate perception of the unsaved can be a stumbling block to our own evangelism efforts. Jesus said in *Luke 17:1* He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! As mentioned last week in Acts 16:3, Paul requested of the young Christian Timothy to be circumcised in order to successfully reach out to the Jews on the mission trail. Paul used “*To the Jews first and also the Greek*” methodology that was called for in the first century. Let us take another passage from the Book of Acts and learn a little more about this removal of stumbling blocks to evangelism.

Acts 21:20-26

²⁰ And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; ²¹ and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. ²² “What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ “Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. ²⁵ “But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.” ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

- Paul had completed three missionary tours and many gentiles were converted. When the Jewish Christians back in Jerusalem heard the reports of this, they rejoiced greatly and gave the glory to God. It was only about a year prior to this event that Paul wrote to the Romans in *10:1-3* *Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.* His wish had come true and with the generous giving from the gentile churches they converted thousands.
- There was also a problem brewing in the church because some of the Jewish converts, including some of the Pharisees, had not yet matured in the Christian faith. They were still holding themselves and others to the rituals of the Law and imposing it on the others. In fact they were even circulating among themselves that Paul was “*teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses*” and “*telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*” This was causing quite a stir among these young, zealous Christian converts from Judaism. Something had to be done or said to address this.
- There were presently four of these zealots that had undertaken a Nazarite vow in accordance to the Law. This was a vow of dedication of oneself that we find in Numbers 6:2-21. Usually set for a period of thirty days, they vowed to partake of nothing from the fruit of the vine, to not touch anything dead and to not cut their hair for the period of

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time. At the end of the vow they would shave their hair and offered it at the temple. He was also required to present an offering of a one-year old male lamb and ewe lamb, a ram, a basket of bread and a drink offering. This would have been an expensive vow for a Jew to make. Many times others would carry the burden of the expense out of appreciation and respect for the sanctity of the vow. Herod actually paid the sacrificial cost for a group of poor Nazarites as a gesture of support for the Jews (*Antiquities of the Jews* 19.6.1.294).

- Even Paul himself had what many believe was a Nazarite vow just prior to coming to Jerusalem. *Acts 18:18 Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.* Naturally he would understand the personal importance of this from a Jewish culture. It was proposed to put this issue to rest by having Paul pay the cost of ending the vow for these men.
- This was something that Paul DID NOT HAVETO DO, but was wise to do for the workings of the kingdom of God. This would put all rumors of Paul being hostile to the traditions of the Jewish Christians and at the same time paving the way for further evangelism, maturity and missions. He was making a non-required, economic sacrifice at the suggestion of the leaders of the church to take away a possible stumbling block from the others.
- 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

The Charge for Us Today

We also must deal with potential legitimate stumbling blocks that can shut the door on our own evangelistic efforts for those searching for a Savior and a church family. There are many considerations we must make and this series has attempted to bring those up.

- We must know that all people have a soul.
- We must know that our mission is to glorify God.
- We must know what the clear message of the gospel is.
- We must know that it is based in the love of Christ.
- We must know that the His church is the family of God.
- We must know our misconceptions we have of the lost.

With that in mind, we must remember that the local church family that is seeking to reach out to the lost is absolutely a key as to whether or not someone will begin that journey to become *wise unto salvation* (2 Tim 3:15). We need to look a bit closer at some of the research and consider whether there are stumbling blocks that can be removed.

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Most conversions to Christ occur through a personal relationship with another human being encouraging them with the Holy Scriptures, consider the following. Researcher Charles Arn has done excellent work on the lost for many years. His surveyed results on why people come to church:

- Special need 1-2%
- Walk-in 2-3%
- Visitation 1-2%
- Church program 2-3%
- Mass evangelism 0-5%
- Sunday school 4-5%
- Pastor/staff 1-6%
- Friend/relative 75-90%

Did you get that? Most of the people that will ever become a member of the family of Christ is because a friend or relative with a personal relationship brought them. All the programs that we could ever put together will never result in many conversions if we do not cultivate a deep personal relationship with another.

Can I keep him Pa?

When a woman has an interest in a man for marriage or vice-versa, one of the biggest steps in that relationship is when they bring the other over to meet the parents. Meeting the family says that this is a serious relationship. They each want to make a good first impression on each other so as to further deepen the relationship. When we invite someone to come and meet the church family, we are saying, “I have a wonderful family and I would like them to meet you because I believe they are going to love you too.” It is a big thing when you bring someone to the church building for a class or worship service!

Researcher George Barna published a study in 1999 titled “*What People Say They Want From a Church.*” They were simply asked “What Factors are Extremely Important to You in Selecting a Church?” Here are the top six reasons.

- Doctrine/Theology..... 58%
- People Caring for Each Other.....53%
- Preaching.....52%
- Friendliness.....45%
- Children’s Programs.....45%
- Helping the Poor.....43%

A Check Up From the Pew Up!

Let us look at each of these important areas and make sure we are living up to what the Bible says. Zig Ziglar, one of the greatest sales trainers for over fifty years, had a favorite expression: “**Efficiency is getting the job done right. Effectiveness is getting the right job done. Excellence is getting the right job done well.**” Let us honestly have a check up from the pew up and see what the health of these prominent areas are for our church family. The following is my honest assessment of these six areas for the church family.

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1) Doctrine/Theology

We believe and teach that the Bible to be the only word of God.

- Psalm 119:160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.
- 1 Cor 2:13 “...which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.”
- Rev 22:18-19 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

We believe and teach that Jesus came into this world as God in the flesh, performed miracles, taught a message of repentance and faith toward God.

- Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

We believe and teach that Jesus is the Christ, that He was crucified on the cross, buried dead in the ground and resurrected on the third day.

- 1 Cor 15:3-4 “...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”
- 1 Peter 2:24 “...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...”
- Galatians 1:4 “...who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age...”

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ desires His gospel message of faith IN Him, repentance TO Him, confession OF Him, baptism INTO Him and service THOUGH Him.

- Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- Luke 24:47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
- Acts 8:36–37 “...and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” 37 [And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]
- Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

2) People Caring for Each Other

Ask those who have been suffering from illness, the economy, sorrow, pain, loss, loneliness and a thousand other hurts. We have excelled in these areas and the Lord has blessed us with opportunities. If you have been here for any time you would know this to be true.

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3) Preaching

I hope that I have done my best to encourage, admonish, educate and motivate you every week. I refuse to give you milquetoast lessons that do not challenge you to want to draw closer to Jesus every single time that we meet together. If I am failing to be effective in this way for you, then I would no longer be the man for the job.

Our elders have done a great job when they fill-in. When we have fill-in preachers on Sunday evenings, we should expect the same. Men, when you sign up to preach a Sunday evening treat it like it is the most special time of your life for in your heart and words rest the encouragement of Christ. Make it your goal to draw the saints closer to His cross.

4) Friendliness

Can we be honest here? We are an extremely friendly congregation...to each other, not necessarily to visitors. We need to view an unfamiliar face with the greatest happiness. We need to make nobody a stranger. We need to make our new visitor program *Hebrews 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.* We must better ourselves in this way, for it could make all the difference for a searcher for Christ. I know you care for them. You know you care for them. God knows you care for them. **THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU CARE FOR THEM!!!**

5) Children’s Programs

I have a confession to make: The primary reason that Jana wanted to come to Camp Hill ten years ago was because of the wonderful youth group. You had great classes, great kids, great parent’s that were involved with the kids, great deacons over that ministry, great summer camps for the kids and great opportunities on the horizon. It was true then and it is true now. Even last night we had 19 extremely not-quiet girls at our home for Girl’s Night Out. This is a great plus.

6) Helping the Poor

We have tried and are doing better with this every year. I can recall many times members of the congregation assisting in Toys for Tots, grocery collections for the needy, benevolence cards for the down and out, assistance for many and now the Golden Living Friends Ministry. There is still much to be done and we must be conscious of the opportunities as they emerge. There are still many single parent moms, prisoners, hungry and hurting souls that will come our way. If we are discerning and alert, we can be both wise stewards and bold lovers of the poor at levels yet to be met.

Conclusion:

This is what excites me so much, for of the top six that the lost are looking for in a church family, we do pretty well. If excellence is getting the right job done well, then we are ever so close. If we could excel in the weaker areas and become excellent in the stronger, then Satan will have his hands full, we will have our joy filled and God will have fulfilled His mission in us. Make it your mission today and the rest of your life to have excellence in a job well done thou good and faithful servants!