

Outreach

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Introduction

If you have your bibles....

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, and year after year, these who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen.

Continually, they searched for new and better methods of fishing and for new and better definitions of fishing. They created witty slogans and displayed them on big beautiful banners. These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters." The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however: They did not fish.

In addition to meeting regularly, they organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. The board hired staff and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the staff and committee members did not fish.

Large, elaborate, and expensive training centers were built whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of fish, the nature of fish, where to find fish, the psychological reactions of fish, and how to approach and feed the fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training, many were graduated and were given fishing licenses. They were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters, which were filled with fish. Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home, they never fished.

They engaged in all kinds of other occupations ... Some felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen. Others felt

that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were was enough.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished.

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who don't fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if, year after year, he never fishes? Is one really following if he isn't fishing?

1st Corinthians 9: 19-23

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Context/Story

Paul was talking to the Corinthians about their testimony before the people in Corinth. Numerous times throughout the book, Paul rebuked the church, for looking like the world. They were bickering and fighting causing divisions within the church, there was gross immorality, Arrogance based on their favorite preacher, Selfishness and madness when they gathered together for corporate worship. Paul rebuked them over and over again because their lives looked much like the culture that surrounded them. Paul's calling was that Christians would live differently than the world, because we are not of this world. We live for a different world. But then we get to 1st Corinthians Chapter 9, and Paul reminds us that while we are not of this world, we are still called to reach this world.

This morning we are going to explore 3 points that are found within our text. Outreach means Contextualization, Outreach means Winning Souls, Outreach Means Relationships

Outreach means Contextualization

1. In 5 verses, Paul uses the words "I became" 5 times.
2. We fight for the precision of the gospel. We don't change it, we don't alter it, we don't minimize it. The Truth of the Gospel is so important that we cannot allow anything to get in the way of it. But once we have that truth well defended. What do we do with it? We bring it into the culture!

3. Paul goes on, "To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews." Was that fun? No. He went into Jewish culture, which had a lot of rules, a lot of regulations, a lot of legalism, and on top of that you can't have any bacon... But he said, "I'll do whatever I have to get in there and tell them about Jesus."
4. Prove
 - a. Acts 17:22-25 - So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."
5. Apply
 - a. Paul tried to figure out how to articulate Jesus in as many ways as possible, to as many people as possible, to win as many people as are possible. And Paul says, "I do all of this," what? For the sake of the what? "For the sake of the Gospel."
 - b. Shame on us as Christians Shame on our churches! If we fight for the clarity of the gospel, yet do little to nothing to help spread the gospel to people who desperately need it. We are undoubtedly called to contend for the faith, defend the truth, we fight the heretics, we refute all false teaching in the name of the Gospel. But sometimes we fall into the trap of defending without spreading.
 - c. What does it mean to give up our freedoms, for the sake of the Gospel?
 - i. Maybe that means we give up our potlucks, our programs, maybe it means we redirect our churches to be outwardly focused instead of inwardly focused.
 - ii. We must wrestle with how this influences our other beliefs. What do we do when our political affiliation gets in the way of our testimony?
 - iii. What do we do when our views on Guns, or vaccines, or conspiracy theories, harms our testimony?
 1. Which is actually more important? Our Testimony, or our freedoms?
 2. Now there may be some people here who absolutely hate what I just said. I understand. America seems to be going downhill fast. But I just want to remind us, that we are not citizens of this kingdom. We are citizens of another kingdom. And our calling from our King is to bring as many people to that kingdom as possible.
 - iv. The only stumbling block we present to this dying world, is Jesus Christ Himself.

Outreach means Winning Souls

1. Vs 19 - For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all

- a. Paul seems to be saying that He is willing to do whatever it takes to remove barriers to the gospel.
 - b. This should shape our worldview as well. This must be our goal. Because we want to win as many as possible. Not as many as are convenient. Not as many as we can manage. Not as many as we would desire but as many as possible.
2. Prove
- a. I saw a twitter post this week from a supposed christian that read, "Jesus cares a lot more about feeding the hungry, taking care of the poor, and finding justice for the oppressed than he does about people receiving Him as their personal Lord and savior"
 - b. I don't get angry easily, but this made me angry. What good is saving people on earth if they spend eternity in hell? OUR FOCUS MUST BE ON WINNING SOULS
 - c. Matthew 5:29-30 - If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.
 - d. Jesus is saying, suffer now so you won't have to suffer in eternity! Physical suffering in this life is absolutely insignificant in relation to eternity.
 - e. WE MUST BE ABOUT WINNING SOULS
3. Apply
- a. He is not just reaching people like him. He is reaching people who are radically different from Him.
 - b. A note on the sovereignty of God... "God saves people, not us" Absolutely it is God who saves people, BUT HE USES US TO DO SO. God in His sovereignty has chosen to use us and our churches to reach people. So whether you are reformed in your theology or not, regardless of where you stand, we are still the means through which God saves. We must be about God's business. Winning Souls.
 - c. So how do we do that? How do we reach people?

Outreach Means Relationships

1. Explain
- a. Vs 22b - I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.
 - b. There seems to be a value paul places on building relationships with the people he is trying to reach.
 - c. Statistics
 - i. Over 90% of our active church members will never share their faith - Over 90% have no intentions whatsoever of actually sharing their faith. They just aren't going to do it.

- ii. Only 21% of our active church members will invite anyone to church within the course of a given year.
- iii. Only 2% will invite an unchurched person to church within a given year
- iv. More than 80% of the unchurched said they would come to church if someone sincerely invited them.
- v. More than 80% of that number say they have never been invited to do so.
- vi. 86% of people attracted to church come because of personal contact with a church member.
- vii. 54% of pastors have not shared their faith in the past 6 months
- d. CHRISTIANS DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH LOST PEOPLE
 - i. Garage Door Culture
 - ii. The Christian Bubble (Spend time at church 4 nights a week, mechanic, Barber)
 - iii. Biblically Illiteracy of the average Christian
- e. A quick show of hands, just curious, how many of us have gone out knocking on doors to share Jesus?
 - i. In my experience about 1 out of 20 houses will actually be willing to hear you out. In fact, I have actually had far more engagement in foreign countries with street evangelism than I have had here in the states.
- f. Cold call evangelism is the most difficult, and least successful type of evangelism, yet the majority of Christians believe that is how to evangelize.
- 2. Prove
 - a. Jesus Discipled 12 men. (lived with them, ate with them, encouraged them, taught them, equipped them)
- 3. Apply
 - a. Neighbor well
 - i. Individual ways to Neighbor Well: Cookies, Dinners, Football Games, House Repair, Block Parties,
 - ii. Church Ways to Neighbor Well: Small Groups in Homes, VBS in the Local Trailer Parks, Tutoring in the community, Free Icecream booths at the little league soccer games.

Conclusion

Imagine if we can do this well. All along the western slope, we see God moving, people hearing the Gospel, getting saved, and the Kingdom of God advancing. Let's be about Outreach. Let's be about Contextualization, Let's be about Winning Souls, Let's be about Relationships.

Charles Spurgeon - If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for

Pray