

Practical Evangelism 2019 Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 3, 2019

Main Theme – A multipart series concerning evangelism and practical application & techniques.

WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

At this time, I want to call forth the ushers distribute the emblems of Communion:

My wife is not a woman given to “water power.” She does not go into tears over the minor upsets of life. She is not one of those women who use tears as a weapon to get what she wants. When she cries, she means it. When she cries, I pay attention.

So you can imagine that I was extremely concerned when I came home one day to find her hovering over our kitchen sink, bawling her eyes out. She was clearly crying over something in the sink, and it wasn't onions. It took some time for me to get her sufficiently calmed to find out what happened.

She was crying because she had lost the diamond out of her engagement ring. It's interesting to note the difference in our reactions. My first thought was, “You've got to be kidding?” (If you knew how little that diamond cost -- and it was the biggest one I could afford at the time -- you'd understand my first reaction). To me, it was a relatively inexpensive gemstone. To her, however, it represented her marriage. She had lost the symbol of something which (she tells me) makes her happy. I began to think about it in a different light.

The Lord's Supper is symbolic in nature. Its value transcends the simple cost of juice and wafers. Its significance is tied to what these earthly items represent. The bread symbolizes a body that was willingly broken on our behalf. The juice symbolizes blood that was shed for our forgiveness. If the diamond from my wife's engagement ring represented our marriage, what should these emblems—simple as they are—represent to us?

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Men's Breakfast – Saturday, February 9, from 9–10:15am
- Women's Ministry – Tuesday, February 12, from 6:30–8:30pm
- Workshop – Biblical Principles of Finance w/ Ginger (Feb. 22–23)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Special thanks to all who participated. Congratulations to Robert Pickett and Elysia Phelps on their elections to the position of Deacon and Ron Phelps to the position of Trustee. Thus, the full leadership team is as follows:

DEACON

Taran Long

Jo Anne Lane

Robert Pickett

Elysia Phelps

TRUSTEE

Ron Phelps

TREASURER

April Aulick

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
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INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. Feel free to turn to the OT Book of Isaiah (cf. 6). A familiar text that will serve as the foundation for today's message.

SETTING THE STAGE

Last Sunday I addressed God's call for us to be change-agents (functioning as the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world' cf. Mt. 5:13 –16). Simply put, God has called us to change the world as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE – This may sound exaggerated but it is absolutely true. Feel free to listen to last week's message and read through the accompanying notes (all posted online) to go deeper on this topic. Allow this word to inform and impact your Christian experience.

KEY – This morning I want to begin a multi-part series on the practicalities of advancing the cause of Christ in the earth. Namely, I want to share on the topic of practical evangelism (i.e., how to effectively share your faith). It's one thing for me to tell you to go change the world. It is another thing to equip you for the task.

-In my experience as a Pastor/believer I have come to realize that most people want to share their faith/participate in God's plan to change the world. They long to be used of the Lord in this manner. They just don't know (practically speaking) HOW to do it. For many, evangelism is a scary term, catalyzing feelings of shame, guilt and regret. I would like to change that for us!

Starting today, I want to take app. four weeks to offer some thoughts on sharing your faith. It is my hope that you will hear and apply this teaching, that you might more effectively serve as a Christian witness. Moreover, it is my hope that people will come to Christ through your more effective evangelism!

LET'S DELVE IN...

TO THE WORD

KEY – I would like to consider a biblical account that provides insight for those who wish to serve as effective witnesses for Christ. Let's consider an event in the life of the prophet Isaiah, as he is called of God to serve as 'salt' and 'light' in his generation!

Isaiah 6:1–8 (NIV)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

KEY – There are several items I would like to consider from this text...

LESSONS FROM ISAIAH PT. 1

CONSIDER that Isaiah had a revelation of the LORD.

NOTE – i.e., Isaiah had come to a deepened understanding of the Lord’s character and nature through this divine encounter. He came to a deeper appreciation of...

1) The Majesty of God (v. 1)

Isaiah 6:1

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

- Note that God was seated on a throne that was high and exalted
- Note that His garments (train of His robe) filled the Temple (splendorous)

2) The Holiness of God (v. 2–3)

Isaiah 6:2–3

2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

- Holy means incomparable (far beyond anything of this earth)
- Holy refers to a moral purity (perfection of nature and character)

KEY – Consider the angelic reaction to God! They covered their faces and feet; shielding themselves as they struggled to bear the glory of God! What kind of a God are we dealing with when we worship!

3) The Sovereign/Kingly Nature of God (v. 5)

Isaiah 6:5

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

-In a time of transition in terms of earthly kingship (v. 1...Uzziah), Isaiah had come to see the King Unchanging and Immutable.

SUMMARY – Isaiah’s understanding of God was greatly expanded in this moment of encounter!

LESSONS FROM ISAIAH PT. 2

This encounter in the Temple did more than open Isaiah's eyes to the nature of God. It also opened his eyes to his true condition before such a God!

-i.e., Isaiah had a revelation of HIMSELF (both apart from and in the Lord).

KEY – Look at how Isaiah describes himself before this majestic, holy and sovereign Lord:

Isaiah 6:5

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

KEY – Yet the Lord did NOT leave things this way! A seraph—apparently ordered by the Lord—flew to the altar and grabbed with a pair of tongs a burning coal. As this was pressed into Isaiah's mouth, a powerful transformation took place:

-He who was ruined and unclean in the glory of God's presence was now pardoned, purified and prepared for deeper degrees of service.

SUMMARY – Isaiah's understanding of himself was expanded in this moment of encounter!

LESSONS FROM ISAIAH PT. 3

Lastly, Isaiah had a revelation of God's HEART and MISSION.

-i.e., In the presence of the Lord, the prophet came to sense the heart of God for this lost world.

KEY – After Isaiah encountered the glory of the Lord & was pardoned for his uncleanness, he began to hear the voice of the Lord speaking. Consider...

Isaiah 6:8

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

Q, What was the essence of the conversation Isaiah overheard?

A. God was looking for someone to represent Him to a lost people.

If I may take the liberty – God was looking for someone willing to be salt and light in the earth...

If I may take the liberty – God was at work in His ever-unfolding program to seek/save the lost...

NOTE – Even in this OT text (700-plus-years prior to Christ) we see the heart of God longing to bring those who are wandering far from home back to Himself. And He has always chosen human representatives to go and get them! This is still the case!

SUMMATIONS

You may be asking:

Q. What does any of this have to do with effective (i.e., practical) evangelism?

A. Practical service FLOWS OUT OF proper spiritual understanding/biblical insight. You can learn all the tips/tricks to sharing your faith, but without a grounding in foundational truths we will NEVER be effective for time or eternity.

NOTE – If we are ever going to reach this world for Christ we MUST...

- 1) Know the character of God (holy, majestic, sovereign)
- 2) Know our condition before Him (with and without Him)
- 3) Understand the heart of the Lord for those who are 'lost'

KEY – Apart from this foundation we will never serve in any meaningful capacity!

GOING DEEPER...

Yet there is more that can be gleaned from this text (beyond Isaiah's revelation)...

KEY – It is the context of this divine encounter that Isaiah SAYS something most profound.

Isaiah 6:8

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

NOTE – I want you to take note of this prayer of Isaiah (this plea before the Lord). I posit that this is the prayer of those who are serious about reaching people for God and changing the world!

KEY – Want to change the world/grow as a witness? Embrace/adopt the prayer of Isaiah!

PRACTICAL TIP – I would recommend adding the prayer of Isaiah to your daily life of prayer before the Lord. This is something practical that we can all do! Thus said, let's take some time to explore this profound prayer (only 5 words)!

ISAIAH'S PRAYER PT. 1

KEY – This is an incredibly PERSONAL prayer.

1) This is not a prayer that calls upon the Lord to act (e.g., “God open their eyes” or “God have mercy on those who do not know you” etc.). Of course, there is room in our Christian experience for such prayers!

-But there is something ‘other’ about the plea of Isaiah.

2) This is not a prayer that calls upon someone else to act (e.g., Lord, send laborers, pastors, missionaries, teachers, churches to do the work). Again, there is room in our Christian experience for such prayers. Jesus told us to pray in such a manner:

Luke 10:2

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

-But there is something ‘OTHER’ about the plea of Isaiah.

NOTE 1 – This was a prayer that connected him (personally) to the work of reaching the lost

NOTE 2 – If we adopt this prayer – it connects us (personally) to the work of reaching the lost

-In some ways it is easy to call upon God to do something/act (EASY)

-In some ways it is easy to volunteer others to complete the task (EASY)

-But to raise your hand & volunteer (like Isaiah) ‘personalizes’ it all (COST)

NOTE – But there is power in a prayer as personal as this! Consider...

1) It sensitizes us to the heart of the Lord

You cannot sincerely pray this prayer (ongoing basis) without connecting to the heart of God. As we pray this prayer, I believe His heart becomes our own. i.e., A heart that beats for those who are far from home and in great peril!

2) It sensitizes us to the lost all around us

How often do you ‘see’ the lost around you? This prayer is a tool God uses to open your eyes—in ever-increasing ways—to the reality of people’s position before the Lord.

-This is how Christ lived

-This is how the E. Church lived

-This is how you & I are to live in Him

ISAIAH'S PRAYER PT. 2

KEY – This is an incredibly PROACTIVE prayer. It stirs action/activity.

NOTE – Once again, the other forms of prayer noted (i.e., “God do something” and “God send someone”) are all about someone else doing something to reach the lost. But the prayer of Isaiah is all about you recognizing your need to DO something.

-i.e., It's about you getting off the bench and onto the field (there's my Super Bowl reference)...

There are far too many believers who are sitting around waiting for someone to do something about the condition of this world v. proactively participating in Christ's mission to change the world. There are three responses to the Great Commission of Christ: 1) sending; 2) going; 3) disobedient.

KEY – Something about this call of Isaiah is unique among the OT prophets. Often, the Lord DIRECTLY called His prophets into divine service. Consider the following two examples:

Jeremiah 1:4–5, 9–10

4 The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

9 Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Ezekiel 2:1–5

1 He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” 2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

3 He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.

KEY – But this is NOT how the call of Isaiah comes about! It is NOT a direct call. Consider:

Isaiah 6:8

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

NOTE – Isaiah was NOT directly called to go forth (though that was the intent of the Lord). Rather, as he comes to know/hear the heart of God – he VOLUNTEERS for service. His prayer/plea was, “Lord, let me serve you and do something about what’s going on in my nation/world! Use me!”

-Aware of the heart of God, he proactively gives himself to the fulfillment of the mission.

-He is stepping forward

-He is taking that first step

-He is willing to give himself

NOTE – He is unaware of the obstacles. He is unaware (fully) of what he is getting himself into. All he knows is the heart of God and the burden thereof! But the Lord takes him up on his offer and sends him forth to serve as—arguably—the greatest of the OT prophets.

Q. Imagine what God could do with you?

PRACTICAL TIP – Needing to feel a bit more engaged in the work? Needing to light a fire in your life (evangelistically-speaking)? Begin to pray this prayer! Begin to offer/volunteer your time, treasure and talents to the Lord and watch what happens in and through you!

KEY – There is something about this prayer that awakens passion and action!

ISAIAH'S PRAYER PT. 3

KEY – This prayer provides much-needed PERSPECTIVE (multi-faceted perspective):

-i.e., Praying this prayer (daily/practical appl.) keeps us grounded in vital truths:

1) It reminds us of the heart of God for the lost

-When you pray this prayer, you are reminded of God's love for those who are lost

2) It reiterates the reality that people really are 'lost'

-When you pray this prayer, you are reminded of people's true condition/eternal destiny

3) It affirms your role in the unfolding plan and purpose of God

-Your purpose and significance as a witness is affirmed (you are a vital comp. in God's plan)

4) It establishes the nature of your relationship before God

-You are His servant called to a great task. You work for Him v. Him working to serve your needs

5) It opens your eyes to the place of faith and His divine power:

-Faith that He can and will use you

-Faith that He will give wisdom as needed

-Faith that He will facilitate divine appointments

-Faith that He will work through you (supernaturally)

-Faith that He will be with you (despite (-) response/per.)

NOTE – These are all elements we can easily forget/neglect in the course of daily life/living. This spiritual prayer (practically offered in the course of one's Christian service) keeps us grounded on truth!

CONCLUSION

Q. Want to grow as an effective witness of Christ? It begins in the most spiritual of ways!

-Seek a deepened revelation of God

-Seek a deepened revelation of yourself

-Seek a deepened revelation of God' heart

-Embrace the prayer of Isaiah as your 'own'

Once this spiritual foundation is established, you will be more likely to effectively serve in a practical manner. Next Sunday we will consider elements of practical evangelism (considering an account from the life/ministry of Christ).