

**Core Seminar**

**Discipling**

**Class 9: Encouraging a Passion for Evangelism & Missions**

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Today we are going to cover the topics of evangelism and missions. With our limited time, we are barely going to skim the surface of both topics. But I encourage you to read further and to consider attending missions and evangelism core seminars that go into much more detail on both of these topics. In some sense, these are not two separate topics; they are closely related. Evangelism is telling the gospel to unbelievers; missions is doing evangelism, except across cultural barriers.

Part 1. Encouraging Evangelism

We begin by thinking about some reasons why we evangelize.

1. Evangelism is compelled and commanded for Christians

We understand that evangelism in normal for Christians.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11, 14, the apostle Paul writes, “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men…Christ love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.” (NIV-84) He doesn’t say, “Since we are Apostles, we try to persuade men” or “Since we have a special gift of evangelism, we try to persuade men.” Rather, he writes that because he fears the Lord, he is compelled to share the gospel and the love of Christ. The same should also be true for every Christian—because we fear God, we are compelled to evangelize.

Evangelism is commanded of all Christians. We share our faith with an unsaved world because that is what God commands us to do. It makes no sense to hoard the gospel to ourselves. We have the best news that anyone could ever want to know. So, why wouldn’t we want to share such good news?

2. Evangelism is a source of joy for Christians

Not only should we evangelize because we are expected to as Christians, but also because evangelism is a critical source of joy for Christians.

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints (Philemon 1:4-7). (NIV-84)

Paul expresses joy in the fruit of God’s work in the life of his friend Philemon. But he also encourages Philemon (and us by extension) to share the gospel regular for our joy. When we share our faith, we gain a fuller understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. We are never to guilt Christians into doing evangelism. We want Christians to share the gospel because it deepens their relationship with Christ—in order to fully understand (and presumably enjoy) the good things we have in Christ, we must share our faith. Evangelism is not just for the other person; it helps us to grow spiritually.

3. Evangelism is for God’s Glory

The third reason why we encourage evangelism rests in its ultimate purposes: to glorify God.

Romans 3:25-26 25whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (NASB)

The purpose of God’s substitutionary work in Christ was first and foremost to vindicate the name of God, because his prior forbearance toward sin had caused his justice to seem to be called into question. We know from other places in Scripture that God showed love for us through the sacrifice of his Son, but the glory of God was the first thing he had in mind. Be reminded that God’s glory and His children’s good are inseparably linked. What glorifies God is “good” for us.

Encouraging Evangelism in Discipling

In your discipleship relationships, you gain more motivation for evangelism when you understand why you are doing it. As we have mentioned before, discipleship is not behavior modification, but the shaping of a Christian’s heart, mind, desires, and motivation. We don’t want to encourage legalistic obedience, but heart-transforming, God-glorifying reasons for evangelism.

An active concern for the lost teaches volumes for others. If you are a discipler, it helps when your friends see evangelism as a natural part of the fabric of your life. It’s not done with a special program; or as an occasional activity; but it is a normal part of your day-to-day existence.

Take some time to think through how you can strategically reach out to others. Evangelism doesn’t have to be spontaneous. It can be very deliberate and planned out. Sometimes it takes just a simple conversation with a friend—thinking through who is in their sphere of influence; who displays an openness to spiritual things; and who they are praying for. Just one or two simple conversations can give your friend the encouragement he or she needs to be bold.

Read together a book on evangelism. A few suggestions: Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, JI Packer; Words to Winners of Souls, Bonar; The Gospel and Personal Evangelism, Mark Dever; Tell the Truth, Will Metzger; Christianity Explained & Two Ways to Live, Matthias Media.

Keep in mind the importance of a church in evangelism. A healthy culture of discipleship should do a lot to commend the gospel to an unbelieving world. By watching how we live together, unbelievers will either see the gospel to be true or false. Likewise, a healthy church culture will spurn its members on to evangelism. For example, in our Sunday services we pray regularly for the gospel to go forth. Especially in the evening service, we try to put forward real life examples of members sharing with others. We want to regularly encourage evangelism through our corporate witness and our corporate prayers.

[PAUSE FOR QUESTIONS.]

**Part 2. Encouraging Missions**

If there are many things we can focus on in discipling– dating, marriage, career issues, parenting, money management – why would we want to give headliner status to the topic of missions? Here are a few reasons *why* we want to encourage missions in discipling.

**Missions are not Optional**

There are a great number of things in the Christian life that one can choose to do or not to do without any blot on your Christian discipleship. I can sing in the CHBC ensemble or help with the sound ministry. These things are significant, but optional. Not every Christian is expected to be involved in them. But involvement in the cause of Global Evangelism is not one of those optional things. All Christians are called to serve the cause of global evangelism in one of two basic ways.

***Goers.*** There are some who are called by God (whatever that means) to leave the place where they are, and going somewhere else with the deliberate intent of sharing the Gospel message in a new place or with a new people. Cf. Matthew 28:19 and Romans 10: 14-15.

***Senders.*** The Biblical picture is that if we don’t go, that doesn’t end our responsibility. Rather, then we structure our lives in order to help support, encourage and to send.

In the book of 3 John we see the universal imperative for ALL Christians to be involved in missions. John writes:

3 John 1:5-8 5Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; 6and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. 8Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (NASB)

In the passage, we see some who sent out by a church for the sake of Christ’s name, and there are some who are to show hospitality to and send out those who will go abroad to proclaim the gospel. Both goers and senders are a part of the work of missions. For those who send out missionaries, a passion for global missions should be a normal part of their life.

The Great Commission was given to the church.Missions is the work of all members of a church, not just a few. Therefore, we want to inculcate a passion for missions in every disciple. We can’t have a biblically faithful church without a passion for missions.

**An Engagement with Missions Facilitates Spiritual Growth**

We deliberately talk about missions in our discipling relationships because we want our friends to prosper spiritually. Again, John writes:

3 John 1:1-4 1The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. 3For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. 4I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. (NASB)

(How does John say that Gaius was showing his faithfulness to the truth that especially highlighted his spiritual health? Read on)

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John seems to base much of his confidence in Gaius’ spiritual health on Gaius’ willingness to care for and welcome itinerate evangelists or missionaries sent out presumably by John’s home church. This particular act demonstrates for John Gaius’s love for the lost and for other Christians.

We deliberately cultivate this kind of love in the lives of our friends because we want them to do well spiritually. Cultivating a passion for missions promotes spiritual health because it is one of the most selfless things we can do as a Christian.

**An Engagement with Missions Brings God Glory** (Cf. Romans 15:8-9, 15-16)

If we are genuine Christians, then a desire to see God glorified should be a very real and significant part of life. In your discipling relationships, you do your friend a great service when you cultivate a taste for missions.

**Missions Seldom Discussed as part of Basic Discipleship**

When people think in terms of 1-on-1 discipling, rarely does missions seem to be discussed. Christians talk about their personal devotional life, their prayer times, their struggle with sin, and even their need to do local evangelism, but the issue of the global missions seems to seldom be broached. If we want people to understand this aspect of basic Christian discipleship, we need to be deliberate in talking about it.

**Encouraging Missions in Discipling**

So what can we do in discipling relationships to encourage this passion for missions?

Make the topic of missions a regular part of your relationship. Just like prayer or Bible study, you can make this concern for missions a regular part of your discipling another person.

When you get together you can make a point to regularly pray for missions and missionaries. If you are meeting up with someone regularly, just make a point of praying for one of our supported workers in the back of the CHBC directory.

Read together a good book on missions. A few suggestions: *Let the Nations be Glad,* John Piper; *Operation World*, Patrick Johnstone; *A Vision for Missions,* Tom Wells;

*From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya,* Ruth Tucker; *Mack and Leeann’s Guide to Short-term Missions*, Mack Stiles.

You can also consider various missionary biographies: *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson*, Courtney Anderson; *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey*, Timothy George

Model a concern for missions. Let your friend know how you are personally, deliberately structuring your life in order to be faithful to God’s passion for global missions. Let them know about the decisions that you’ve made about your time, your money, and your vacations in light of your desire to advance the work of Christ around the world.

Talk specifically about their role in global missions. Not every Christian will become a pastor or missionary. That’s just not biblical. But every healthy and mature Christian must at some point ask what his or her role is in God’s plan to reach the nations. Some will be goers, some will be senders, but all must be involved.

**Discipling Those Who are Considering Becoming Missionaries**

Finally, a few thoughts on what to consider if the person you are discipling seems like they may want to become a missionary.

First, get them to start talking with others. We want to do this because we want people to be praying for them. We also want them to do this because, quite frankly, some people might need to be slowed down before they go abroad. We less often say “no” to a person’s desire to go abroad, and more often say, “Wait…stick around and grow for a while in a healthy church…and give us some time to get to know you better.”

Second, encourage them to talk to a church leader sooner rather than later. A lot of people falsely believe that a calling to missions is an intensely personal decision. A decision to pursue missions must involve your local church. Rather than making a *settled* decision and then informing your church leaders, we would prefer you to get elders involved very early on in the process. The only way we can shepherd you and care for you in this process is if you make yourself known to us early on. Please don’t ever think that you are wasting the elder’s time if they haven’t figured everything out yet.

Third, help them realize the church sends missionaries, not they themselves. The burden should never be on one person’s shoulders alone to discern a call to missions or to prepare for the work of missions. Our elders and our church as a whole wants to help; to walk with them as they consider how they are called to fit into God’s plan for the nations.

Fourthly, consider what the church would be looking for is a potential missionary: Dependability; faithfulness in attendance and serving in the church; stable Christian beliefs; a track record of good judgment; a consistent prayer life and quiet times; and sound theological understanding of God, Christ, man, and Scripture.

Conclusion:

* Concern for evangelism and missions is a basic part of what it means to be a faithful Christian disciple.
* Helping our friends to understand this truth will give them greater joy, and God his rightful glory.

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***Next Week: Discipling People who are Hurting.***