

**Core Seminar**

**Evangelism**

**Class 5: Corporate Witness**

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I. Introduction

Well, Good Morning and Welcome to the 5th of 13 classes in the Evangelism core seminar.

**Introduce:**

* My name is Blake Rushing and my co-teacher this summer is Jonathan Morgan
* Did everyone get a handout?
* Let’s pray

Before we look back on what we’ve been learning I’d like to see if anyone took the opportunity to share the Gospel in the past week?

We do want to encourage you to continue to pray and ask God to open doors for you to speak with people about Christ. To seek ways to begin conversations and move them toward the Gospel.

OK, Briefly, let’s review what we’ve been learning the last five weeks.

be affected by the G &ith non- In week 1 we went from Genesis to Revelation and saw how, throughout history, God is saving people for His glory. In week 2 we discussed how God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility fit together in evangelism. In week 3 we looked at what the Gospel message is - namely that Jesus came and died on the cross for sinners, rose from the dead and now calls all people to repent and believe in Him. And, last week, we learned how to share our personal testimony in a way that proclaims the Gospel, but also illustrates it as well.

B. Today’s Class

In today’s class we’re going to talk about the corporate witness of the local church. As always, the aim of today’s class is to equip and encourage you to become more faithful personal evangelists by learning how to use the church in every part of our evangelism.

Before we go any further, I have a couple of caveats. Some people could misunderstand this topic and think the local church exists to do evangelism for them. They may think that the preacher is a paid professional, that he is their evangelist for hire, and that their only responsibility in evangelism is to bring unbelieving friends to hear their preacher explain the Gospel.

On the other hand, others may think that evangelism should be done away from the church. In other words, to avoid scaring off non-Christians, evangelism should be done in personal settings away from any kind of religious institution or gathering. But, neither one of these views is correct. Faithful evangelism lies between these two poles, which we will discuss this morning.

1. **First**, we’ll discuss how the local church proclaims the Gospel when it gathers.

2. **Second**, we’ll think about ways we can use the local church’s gathering to discuss the Gospel with non-Christians.

3. **Finally**, we’ll discuss how the local church helps us to be more faithful evangelists.

II. How the Corporate Gathering Proclaims the Gospel

The church is the gospel manifest in these last days. When we gather as a church, we do it to hold out the Gospel to each other. But we also gather to hold out the Gospel to people who don’t yet know Jesus. In fact, we not only hold out the Gospel, but Jesus promises that when His people come together in His name, that He is actually among them. Listen to these words from Matthew 18:20, “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*”

In this verse, we see that Christ ***dwells*** among His people. And because of this truth, the corporate gathering is a ***powerful*** evangelistic tool. So, what I’d like to discuss now is how the church works as an EV tool and I want to build an argument for why you should **confidently** invite non Christians to join you at church.

**Any questions?**

B. Five ways the church gathering portrays the Gospel to non-Christians:

1. When the church gathers together, non-Christians can hear the Gospel proclaimed.

One of the main tasks of a pastor is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. All over the New Testament, Paul and Peter and John and Jesus speak about the centrality of the Gospel in the life of God’s people. Therefore, when the church gathers to hear God’s Word, the pastor should be clearly preaching the Gospel. It should be central to the message. And By God’s grace, we’ve come to expect that here, at CHBC. No matter who steps into the pulpit, we are confident that he will preach the Gospel.

To give an example of how God works through the proclamation of truth during the gathering of the church let’s read from **1 Cor. 14:23-25**.

*“If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”*

The context of this passage has to do with spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy. To understand this we should remember that the vast majority of “prophecy” in the Bible is not about fortelling, but rather the act of exhorting God’s people by preaching to them what God had already told them in the scriptures.

What is Paul trying to communicate here?

How is this passage an encouragement for us to bring non-Christians to church?

In members meetings and at baptisms, we’ll often hear testimonies of people who came to church as a non-Christian, heard the Gospel proclaimed and God opened-up their hearts just as He did with Lydia in **Acts 16** and gave them a new heart of flesh!

Whether from the pulpit via service leading, scripture reading and prayers, or from the congregation in antiphonal scripture readings, “*an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.*”

2. When the church gathers together, non-Christians can hear the Gospel prayed.

In a similar way to hearing the Gospel ***proclaimed***, non-Christians should be able to hear the Gospel ***prayed***. I don’t know what your life was like before Christ, but even before I was born-again, I prayed. And I do not think this is uncommon.

However, I do believe that when a non-Christian gathers with a healthy church, they will hear prayers that are not just scripted, liturgical religious talk, but rather will hear *heartfelt* prayers of *adoration, confession, thanksgiving* and *supplication*.

I imagine they will notice that a truly Christian prayer is different because it is Christ-centered, God-glorifying and fully dependent on the grace of a sovereign and holy God.

So, when we invite non-Christians to our church services or bible studies or even over for a meal, we should pray Christ-centered and God-glorifying prayers and also ask the Lord to use the prayers of others to draw people to Himself.

**3. When the church gathers together, non-Christians can hear the Gospel in the songs we sing.**

One of the sweetest aspects of corporate worship is when Christians gather and sing. According to the Scriptures, God’s people should sing both joyfully and truthfully. When non-Christians hear God’s people lift their voices as if they believe in what they’re singing, it is striking and can make them wonder why we are so excited about God. Not only is **joyful** singing important, but we should also sing **truthfully**. When we sing congregationally, we should sing truths that reflect the Gospel we see in God’s Word. Listen to David’s words in **Psalm 119:172:**

“*My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.*”

When David – or we – sing of God’s word, we proclaim truth to everyone within earshot.

Listen also to **Colossians 3:16** where Paul exhorts the church to:

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching & admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*”

God’s people should sing songs that are true, and as we do, God can use those Gospel saturated lyrics to pierce the hearts of those who do not believe. During my three years attending CHBC, I’ve heard multiple accounts of the Lord using hymns to point people to Christ and draw them to Himself.

4. When the church gathers together, non-Christians can see the Gospel displayed.

Before Christ ascended to heaven, He entrusted two ordinances to His church; can anybody tell me what those two ordinaces are?

Both baptistm and the Lord’s supper are pictures of the Gospel. CHBC partakes in the Lord’s supper on the first Sunday of every month and we baptize folks on the third Sunday of every month. When a non-Christian sees these two ordinances being carried out, they are witnessing a clear picture of what it means to be born-again, to obey and follow Christ.

When we baptize folks here at CHBC, we ask the Christian to share their personal testimony – as discussed last week – about how Christ intersected their destructive hell-bound life, and redeemed and rescused them from their sins.

Everyone in the building will hear the story of God’s amazing, saving, sovereign grace in the life of the person being baptized through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By grace, through faith, the person has been united with Christ and declared righteous before a holy God. And now, by trusting in Christ, they’ve died to their old life of sin and are living for Christ. The old man is in the grave and by the grace of God, he has been raised to new life, thus baptism displays the Gospel.

In the same way, when a non-Christian sees the gathered church come to the Lord’s table to partake of the Lord’s supper, they see a clear picture of what it means to obey and follow Christ. Christians are people who have fellowship with the Lord through the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood. We take sin seriously and we rest in Christ’s substitutionay atoning sacrifice with joy-filled hearts. They will hear the pastor explain that this meal is reserved only for those who have been born again and are trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Now, for someone who is unregenerate, fencing them off from the table may seem judgmental and unloving, but in reality, it is actually one of the most loving things a church can do. Thank about what Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 11:27-30**; “*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*”

We are protecting someone from drinking judgment on himself. It would be unloving for Christians to proclaim that all people are “good with God” when in fact they’re not. By rightly preaching, teaching, singing, baptizing and serving the Lord’s Supper, the church proclaims clearly to the world the line that Christ has drawn between those who are right with Him and those who aren’t. So, non-Christians can see the Gospel displayed through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

5. When the church gathers together, non-Christians can see the Gospel lived out.

I’m sure many of you have heard people complain about church. Just last weekend, I was out evangelizing in Anacostia with the ARC brothers and sisters and one older man told me “I believe in God, but I don’t believe in church – that’s something created by man, not God.” Often times, Christians are accused of being hypocrites who don’t “practice what they preach.”

To some extent, that is certainly true since 100% of Christians are sinners. From time to time, churches and those ***claiming*** to represent the church have horribly misrepresented Christ in a variety of ways. But, we must recognize that the church is still one of the best evangelistic tools God’s given us.

Listen to these words from Christ Himself in **John 13:34-35;** “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

Did you hear that? Jesus says that when we love each other and serve each other, Jesus shows that He is who He says He is to a watching world. Or look at **1 Peter 2:12;** “*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*”

In a similar way, in **John 17:20-23** Jesus says that when His church is unified He is seen to be true. Let’s read it together:

“*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me*.”

The local church gathering makes the invisible kingdom of Christ visible. It is one of those things people have to see to believe. In the church you have people from every tribe, tongue, nation, economic situation or political affiliation all come together in peace and love for no apparent reason other than Jesus and the world cannot explain it, only a supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit can create something like the local church. Through ISM, I have heard multiple Chinese students remark about the extraordinary kindness and generosity they’ve experienced through CHBC members.

**Any questions?**

III. How to Use the Corporate Gathering in our Personal Evangelism

Now that we’ve talked about how the corporate gathering both proclaims and pictures the Gospel to non-Christians, let’s think about four simple ways to use this gathering to help our personal evangelism.

A. When we talk about the church, we should speak highly of it.

This point is short and simple, but in your conversations with non-Christians, talk about the way the Lord has blessed you through the local church. Sadly, many people come from backgrounds where the church has not rightly proclaimed and protected the Gospel and because of it they have a low view of “organized religion.” And many folks have had bad experiences with their local church and have been hurt by professing Christians and are now very cautious and guarded about church because they are afraid of being hurt again.

So, as you are talking to the people who are in your everyday life, talk about the way God has blessed you through the relationships and the lessons the Lord has been showing you through His word and through your church.

**B. We should invite non-Christians to church.**

One of the easiest things we can do is to invite family, friends, co-workers and neighbors to church. When you do this, consider a few things to help make the most of their visit.

* ***Set Expectations:*** when you invite them, it’s a kind thing to tell them what to expect. Some people can be intimidated in coming to a new place, especially a church. Just telling them what to expect can help them feel more comfortable and prepared.
* ***Prep with Prayer***: ask a few other members to pray for them to come and be affected by the gospel.
* ***Baptisms:***if you can choose when your friend will visit, try to invite them to a service where there’s a baptism so they can hear a testimony of how Jesus has changed a life.

**C. We should talk with our non-Christian friends about what they experienced at church.**

After the service, take the opportunity to ask for their thoughts on what they heard and saw. An easy way to do this is to have already arranged for them to join you and a few other members to go out to lunch or dinner after the service. During this time your friend will be able to see the Gospel lived out and have conversations with other believers.

Also, when you follow-up with them make sure you thank them for coming with you to church. Attending a church service - what may seem like a small step to you, may be a giant leap for some folks.

D. We should invite non-Christians just to hang out with us and our Christian friends.

Another simple, but important part of our personal evangelism is to invite our unbelieving friends to join us in our everyday lives. Whether you’re having a house party, playing some kind of sport, watching a movie or a game, or going out to eat, we should find ways to invite non-Christians to come along so that they can see the Gospel lived out among other believers.

What are some ways you hang out with non-Christian friends?

Do you make time to hang out with non-Christian friends?

What are some things to consider if a non- Christians asks you to hang out with them and their friends?

How might this be different from you inviting them out?

If we initiate and invite them, we will have the “home-field advantage” and won’t put ourselves in a temptation-filled environment.

If you do get invited to hang out with non-Christians and you’re concerned, bring a Christian brother or sister to help you faithfully fight against sin.

Any questions?

IV. How the Church Encourages us to Faithfulness in Evangelism

1. The local church equips us to evangelize.

At the beginning of our lesson I mentioned some people thinks pastors should be the evangelists and that we should just bring non-Christians to hear them speak, but this is not what the New Testament teaches.

The Bible is very clear that all Christians are called to proclaim the Gospel and that our pastors should be equipping us to evangelize, not doing it for us. Listen to what **Ephesians 4:11-12** says about this:

“*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*”

The training of the church to do the work of the ministry is one of the primary responsibilities of the pastor. It is actually the reverse of the misconception we started with: the labor of the pastor is to ***feed Christians*** so that ***they*** can take the gospel out into the world each week. That is why we have this evangelism core seminar. The purpose of this class is to equip you to go out and proclaim the Gospel. Something you should remember is that God has equipped each of us to proclaim the Gospel.

* You are who you are and you are where you are for a reason.
* Your evangelism doesn’t have to look like someone else’s evangelism.
* God has placed you there to make His name known.
* The job of the pastor is to help you be ready to do that.

2. The local church provides opportunities for evangelism.

Most of our evangelism should flow from our relationships with the non-Christians God’s placed around us. But, in God’s kindness we can also look to our local church for other opportunities to share. While it will look different in every local church, the church can provide opportunities to help you evangelize. For instance, at CHBC we have:

* Christianity Explained/Explored groups
* Random street evangelism/preaching outings
* ISM
* ESOL on Saturday mornings
* Gospel preaching at the Central Union Mission

Members just like us often organize and oversee these ministries. These ministries give us opportunities to co- labor with like-minded brothers and sisters who can be a huge encouragement for our evangelism!

3. The local church encourages us to evangelize.

Another great advantage of doing evangelism in the context of a local church is that we help each other to be faithful in evangelism. **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, “*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*”

**Any questions?**

So, in conclusion, the local church – CHBC – should be a supplement to our personal evangelism, not a substitute for it. Remember, it is a spiritual discipline that we must not neglect.

**Homework**

1. Continue to praying for:

* God to help you love lost people.
* Open doors for Gospel.
* Three People.

2. Invite someone to church.

3. Hang out with at least one of the people you’re praying for.

FINAL

QUESTIONS

VI. Appendices

A. Manuscript Outline



B. Bible Passages to Look-up

*Print and cut this page to hand out slips to volunteer readers at the beginning of class (saves time):*

**1. Matt 18:20**

**2. 1 Cor. 14:23-25**

**3. Psalm 119:172**

**4. Colossians 3:16**

**5. John 13:34-35**

**6. 1 Peter 2:12**

**7. John 17:20-23**

**8. Ephesians 4:12**

**9. Hebrews 10:24-25**