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The Importance of Scripture in Evangelism

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The Importance of Scripture in Evangelism

1. God's Word is Powerful

God's Word is able to penetrate a person's heart and change them.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of the soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Though this verse speaks about entering into God's rest, the application of this verse is important to know in evangelism. The Billy Graham organization comments on the word, "judge," in this text is that the original Greek word, *kritikos*, is used only once in the entire Bible. *Kritikos* refers to "one whose business and special gift is to judge." "It is the work of the Gospel, through the Holy Spirit and the understanding of God's Word that we are judged...and convicted."

Evangelist and author Bill Fay remarks: "How in the world can you reach someone who cannot understand God's love? You cannot. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will move through God's Word" (pg. 42 of *Share Jesus Without Fear*). Martin Luther once said that the Bible is like a lion. If people criticize it, you don't defend it - you let it out of its cage."

People may object to the Bible by saying things like:

- There are many errors in the Bible. You can simply ask you're the person, "Would you show me one? Most people have never read the Bible and cannot find one when you ask them.
- Or they may say, "there are so many translations" implying that it has been changed or that is not accurate. You can say, "they all say the same thing because they come from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts." Most people do not know what a translation is.

Randy Neuman in his book, *Questioning Evangelism*, says "...our goal ... is to get our friends to read the Bible...If it really is the inspired, powerful, untamed Word of a sovereign God, it can be trusted to do its own convicting...work". They may object to the Bible being true and accurate. If so, you could ask them: "Do you think it is

possible that the God of the Universe if he wanted to communicate with us – that He could inspire some kind of written revelation like the Bible?” (p. 132-133, *Questioning Evangelism*).

2. Use Scripture to explain who Jesus Christ is

Paul Little in his book, *How to Give Away Your Faith* suggests “In presenting the claims of Christ, it is helpful to use the words of Jesus where possible as there are some who suggest that this is all they will accept.” (p. 57, *How To Give Away Your Faith*). Again, most people respect Jesus as a great moral teacher. Muslims respect Jesus as a great prophet but do not know that He claimed to be God and many Muslims do know what Jesus said. This is where John 14:6 and the “I AM” statements of Christ are important such as John 10:30; John 8:58. I like to refer to Jesus proclaiming His Deity before the High Priest of Israel, Caiaphas in Matthew 26:65 where he says “Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy...” Jesus was proclaiming His deity to the High Priest of Israel. Many people do not know that Jesus was more than a Prophet. He was God incarnate and this was one of the few times that He spoke up at his trial before the Sanhedrin to declare His Deity!

3. We are able to reason with scripture from God’s Word.

In Acts 17:1-4 it says that Paul spent three Sabbaths where he “reasoned with them from the Scriptures”. Some of the audience were Jews and some were “devout Greeks. The Greek word translated ‘reasoned’ is the root word dialogue. Paul emphasized who Jesus is (that Jesus was the Messiah and is God) and what Jesus did for them (suffer and rise from the dead). Scripture was his platform to reason from.

4. Scripture can answer the inner emptiness of people

Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.” John 10:10 is a great verse in the Four Spiritual Laws where Jesus says,

“I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly (a full and meaningful life). From these scriptures you can give your personal testimony. Most people do not have complete and full satisfaction in their life. Augustine’s statement

still rings true today when he said, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless til they find their rest in Thee.” Using scripture at times in an appropriate manner can open up a person’s heart.

5. Scripture can deal with a person’s NEED

Randy Neuman in his Book, Questioning Evangelism says “more than 70 percent of the Bible is narrative and Jesus often told stories... In evangelism, we should declare the doctrine of Romans – the gospel. He suggests of asking people (one of his many questions):

“Have you ever read the Bible for yourself?” Some will say “yes” to this question; most will say “no”.

To those who say “yes” you can follow up with a question such as: “Do you know what the Bible’s main theme is” and most will say “no” and then you can share the gospel with them and show them how it addressed their deepest need from God’s Word: A personal relationship with the Living God!

6. God’s Word does not return void

Isaiah 55:11 says, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (NIV). This verse does not mean we should hammer a bunch of Bible verses into an unbeliever’s head. But it does mean that God’s Word is powerful and given at the appropriate time and manner can have a lasting impact on a person. I came to Christ having read the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:48 where Jesus said “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The Holy Spirit convicted me from this passage that I could not earn eternal life and that I had sinned before a Holy God and needed to repent. In Luke 8, Jesus explains the Parable of the Sower and in verse 11, Jesus says “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God...” Jesus is affirming that God’s word is true and when we share it with others, it will impact 4 kinds of soil or responses. Verse 15 Jesus says “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” Out of the four soils, three did not ultimately heed God’s Word but nevertheless, Jesus affirmed the importance of sharing God’s Word with others and indicates that there will be those who do indeed respond to it in a positive and life changing way! We see this in Acts 16, where after

hearing Paul preach the Gospel, “a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira ... was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”

7. The Importance of God’s Word is seen in the life of Jesus and the Disciples

Jesus answered Nicodemus concerns with scripture in that he used an Old Testament story from Numbers 21:4-9 to show the He would be lifted up (ultimately on the Cross) to save people spiritually.

Thus, Jesus explained from the scriptures what it meant to be born again. In John 4, Jesus said that He was the “Living Water”. The woman at the well was a Samaritan. Jesus first asked her for water. In this section of scripture, we learn that Jesus moved the conversation back to Him. He used a metaphor and comparison (“living water”) to make spiritual truths more easily understandable. He told her he was the Messiah. Jesus often used scripture to declare truth to people and so should we.

The Apostle Paul in Acts 17 when addressing the Athenians in his sermon on Mars Hill started with something that they were familiar with (General revelation) and their “altar with the inscription, “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” but then transitioned from the fact that God exists to declaring “...that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Thus, Paul moved from general revelation to specific revelation and paraphrased the scripture to proclaim the Gospel.

In Acts 8, an Ethiopian Eunuch, was reading a passage out of Isaiah 53 which he did not understand and Philip the evangelist asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Verse 31 explains what happened. The Ethiopian eunuch said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” Philip taught him the Word of God and received the Lord as his own personal Savior and Lord. This illustrates that people do not understand the Word of God until the Holy Spirit often through the guidance of a believer will unveil the truth of God’s Word. I Peter 1:23 says, “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”

8. Finally, using God's Word gives us confidence and clarity in presenting the Gospel.

By storing up God's word in our heart, we not only have a road map to present the Gospel but we will have confidence in sharing the Gospel. Often those whom you share Christ with will know that you are knowledgeable where they may never have read the Bible themselves. If you use a gospel tract, you can quote them God's Word instead of merely reading God's Word. In Evangelism Explosion method of evangelism, trainees are taught to memorize an outline and scripture. If you are not adept at scripture memory, then you can use a tract which contains God's Word. There is also the one verse method of evangelism based on one Scripture, Romans 6:23. You don't need to memorize 100 Bible verses but it is helpful to have a handful of scriptures to highlight the Gospel when you are sharing your faith. Sometimes, you may find that you forget to have available a tract with you to share Christ but if you have God's Word hidden in your heart, you can share the Bible verses that explain the gospel to others.