

SEEING THE LIGHT

how to prepare your heart for learning and sharing the gospel

LESSON 12 | THE FINAL LESSON | 2/27/2021

Paul is Christianity's missionary par excellence. And in our Sunday's Adult Bible Class we have considered Paul's dramatic conversion where after being blinded because of the old man he was serving, he saw the light of the gospel and served Jesus Christ alone. He was commissioned by God to be "a chosen instrument . . . to carry [God's] name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Paul had great zeal for this task, and he extensively engaged in all kinds of evangelistic endeavors: in synagogues, with individuals, in public halls, in homes, and through letters. God blessed his ministry, and Paul planted churches and tended to new flocks all across the Greek and Roman world of the first century. **His example in Acts** and deposit of teaching in his epistles remain for Christians and are a large piece of the apostolic foundation that continue to encourage and instruct Christians today.

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The purpose of our study was to re-experience with Saul of Tarsus what it was that helped him see the light. It's a journey to find that...

1. **THAT JESUS really IS THE SON OF GOD.**
2. **THAT GOD FOLLOWERS should LOVE PEOPLE INSTEAD OF HURT THEM**
3. **THAT SIN WAS THE real SOURCE OF HIS PROBLEMS**
4. **THAT because this SON of GOD was REALLY RAISED, there really is LIFE AFTER DEATH.**
5. **THAT it really is not true that ONE RELIGION IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER.**
6. **THAT even his own CONVERSION would not be a MIRACULOUS EXPERIENCE. It would be a demonstration...**
7. **THAT FAITH, SAVING FAITH, would manifest true PENITENCE and BAPTISM. The heart would be pricked and the old man must die...**
8. **AND that GOD'S PURPOSE would take him places where Saul would have never imagined.**
9. **AND THAT GOD'S PURPOSE would show HIM how much he would SUFFER.**

And we go through the same discoveries in opening our eyes to the light when we chose to become Christians. We "see the light" of the gospel on us and open our hearts to its wondrous treasure...

But then with opened eyes, and opened hearts, we are called to open our mouths. And this journey with the Apostle is intended to help us forge the path ahead for us – no matter the limitations we see in our personalities or in our knowledge.. And when we see how we came to see the light, it helps us see how we can open the eyes around us that we know, that we love – and those who are yet to become our friends.

But we all admit; we have not done enough. If you have had those thoughts, rest assured you are not alone. Perhaps we worry over many things:

1. Will we offend? Certainly, it is not the call of the light to be objectionable – in fact, we should follow the model of "as long as it depends on you, to live in harmony" with those around us (Romans 12:18).
 - a. the truth is that the Gospel is always offensive at its core (John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 1:18).
 - b. And from Paul's journey to the light – we find it is the message he preached that offended people – like the Philippians (Acts 16). Whenever they met Paul, they were impressed with his demeanor and kindness.
2. Do we need to become experts?
 - a. I am sure Peter meant that we are to have a defense for the hope that is within us because we have learned what that defense is (1 Peter 3:15).
 - b. And without exception, conversion events in Acts was always followed by teaching.
 - c. But Paul began teaching immediately (Acts 9:20, "and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus "). Even Apollos was teaching accurately many things – but not all things until he was taught by the couple Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26).
3. Do we have to win one every time?
 - a. Sometimes we are fearful, not because we think we will be offensive – or because we do not know enough – but because we don't want to be ridiculed.
 - b. Paul was... (Acts 17:32, they sneered). But not with everyone...
 - c. And that's the point. We do not share to win every one. We share to win one at a time.

An Adult Bible Study by Don Hooton

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You don't have to be an expert. You don't have to be offensive. You'd don't need to fear. But from Paul and the book of Acts, we can see these ways to make the task possible:

1. Be genuinely concerned.

- a. The driving force behind Paul's evangelism was love for the unbelieving world – just like the Lord Jesus. Jesus wept for his people. Paul wanted to give his life for his people. His heart was bigger than his body.
- b. And from experience I know – bigger than mine.
 - i. Have you like me just grown callous over the foolishness around you?
 - ii. Have you just decided not to speak because it never does any good?
- c. Paul began sharing his faith in Christ because he was burdened for his people (Romans 9:1-3) and for the Athenians (Acts 17:16) and both of their spiritual bondage.
 - i. He saw the Jewish raw allegiance to a religious system that made them believe they were elevated above all people and a works-righteousness that made them self-righteousness, a righteousness he himself had.
 - ii. He saw the Gentiles idols and recognized their need for the one true God who in Christ offered them real life.
- d. He did not just go after the “easy” converts. He went for people he cared about
 - i. For us, whether it is a Mars Hill or if it's friend's home, it won't ever start until we open our hearts with the compassion we have been given – and a compassion we want to give.
 - ii. If we are, we will be compelled to share our faith.
- e. If we could learn to share the gospel in passing conversations, we completely by-pass two of the most important and most effective qualities in evangelism – authenticity and love.
 - i. If we start talking to strangers about the gospel, you don't know them and they don't know you. They can't see your compassion immediately; they can't see the consistency you aim to have; and its just because they don't know you.
 - ii. But when people see the gospel in you, how you sacrifice for them or show love to the loveless, when the words about the gospel just roll onto the table of your conversations, they will be most likely to listen.
- f. And here's the danger in that. You don't have to live a consistent Christian life, because they don't know you. They don't know any different. And you don't have to make a real effort to sacrifice for them or show love to them, because you don't know them. They don't expect you to do anything out of the ordinary.
- g. But when you focus on long-term evangelism, you have a chance to do both of those things. You have a chance to give generously, and you have a chance to let them see into your life.
- h. They'll see how you treat your wife, how you interact with your kids, how you keep your home, how you laugh, how you sing, how you entertain yourselves, and most importantly, how you connect all of that to Christ.

2. Be confident.

- a. Paul knew his audience, so he knew that preaching the resurrection would appear quite foolish. Even so, he does not shy away from proclaiming it. If the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to those who believe (Romans 1:16), then it follows that confidence in declaring it is required.
- b. If we are not confident in the message, we will never declare the strange parts of it. But if we are confident in the Gospel, we will be able to share with people everything that they need to know, including the stuff that sounds pretty weird.
 - i. An interesting scene in a Tom Hank's movie Tracey and I recently saw, *The News of the World*, which is about a man, Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd, a former Newspaper man who lost his business before the Civil War and joined the

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Confederate Army, and now after the War, made a living traveling town to town reading newspapers for the illiterate populace for ten cents per person. On one such night, he becomes the agent who must return a young, orphaned girl who had been taken in by Native Americans as a little girl who now orphaned even from them, must be returned to her last remaining family.

- ii. In the final reading he does, he tells the story from Louisiana about “a man dead and buried, who has risen from the grave”... People gasp. Of course, it has nothing to do with Jesus. I Alfred Blackstone. A drunken man so lifeless that his wife calls the doctor who agrees with no pulse, he was dead and buried in a churchyard where by providence, there was a wedding the next day. As the bride readied herself to enter the chapel, she heard a pounding on wood. And again. And the entire wedding party joined her in the dig to set him free... And as Captain Kidd tells the story he was very much alive – people applauded with joy. And when he the dead man was out he leaned over to the groom and said, “Feller’, when you get in that church and she says till death us do part,...don’t you believe a word of it...”
- iii. My point: Well, I loved that part. But the point is that people will listen and follow along with what you want to share.
- c. After all, if you honestly believe that a man came back from the dead, why wouldn’t you see that as a story worth sharing?

3. Be gentle and respectful.

- a. 1 Peter 3:15 instructs Christians to be ready to defend their faith when the need arises. While many know of that mandate, the final instructions of that verse are often overlooked. Peter goes on to tell his readers to carry out that defense with gentleness and respect.
- b. Paul exemplifies those two things beautifully as he engages the Athenians.
 - i. He is complementary rather than judgmental.
 - ii. He is never condescending.
 - iii. He acknowledges that the Athenians are trying desperately to embrace the truth, even pointing out that they got some things quite right. They thought there may be a God that they didn’t know, but wanted to acknowledge. Their own philosophers and poets had conveyed truths about this God. The fact that Paul was able to quote the pagan writers demonstrates that he did in fact respect these people enough to learn where they were coming from. He approached them by commending their honest pursuit of truth, then explaining to them what they were missing.
 - iv. Being argumentative and forceful may just enable you to win debates, but you will not win many people over to the faith that way.

Scripture calls us to a better way. If you approach evangelism to be a life to share – and not a war to win – you will find it less scary – and a step to finally ***see the Light.***