

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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CONTEMPORARY EVANGELISM

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I. Evangelizing – Present and Future

Evangelism is a passion of mine, but finding out where the Lord wants me to specifically use this in my future ministry is a daunting task. Until the Lord reveals where he wants my wife and I to minister in a full-time setting we are presently evangelizing where we are and whenever we can so that the lost will come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Beginning seminary at Liberty has been fantastic, but finding out how God will use me has been overwhelming in some cases. G.K. Chesterton may have said it best, “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it’s been found difficult and not tried.”¹

Since I was not brought up in a traditional Christian home where we went to church every week it has been difficult to step out in faith into a life of ministry. Relying fully on God for financial means is something my family always taught me that I was supposed to take care of myself. Now it is up to me to lead my wife and I to where God is leading us once I graduate this December. As of now, the Lord has truly shown us in small steps to help build our faith about our finances to see what He has in store for us. Rasmussen states it this way, “For when it is whole, Christian faith seeks to penetrate the entire web of human existence, and economic life is one of the strands that runs throughout.”²

¹ Sermon Illustrations, “Christianity,” Sermon Illustrations, <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/christianity.htm> (accessed May 9, 2011).

² Larry L. Rasmussen, *Economic Anxiety & Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 78.

II. How God is Moving in Evangelism Opportunities

Currently, the Lord has placed me in a place of bi-vocational ministry. This is what The Lord has blessed the current office I work with by providing us work during an extremely difficult economy especially in architecture and construction. This has allowed my wife and I to pay off some of our debts and look at selling our house to become more flexible for whatever the Lord wants us to do in ministry.

Our church currently has me on staff as a pastor where I teach the 5th and 6th graders in our own 'youth' group setting which has been very fun. This ability has afforded me the scholarship to attend Liberty University through our church. Our lives have been extremely blessed these past few years as well as some difficulties.

We lost a dear friend who was also the associate pastor of our church who had two years ago asked me to be on the board for a ministry he founded called Extreme Evangelism. This ministry also uses the evangelistic tool of the "Jesus Bus". This ministry plays over 1,000 watts of Christian music that draws crowds to the Jesus Bus then once we have a group we tell them about Jesus Christ through testimonies and scripture. The Lord pre-ordained this tragedy and has placed me in the position of ministry pastor for the Jesus Bus at this time to continue this ministry to the inner city areas.

These two ministries are what the Lord is doing presently in my life while I am attending

Liberty University. The first ministry, 5th and 6th graders was born out of God telling me to say yes to what He was going to do, and our pastor asked me and my wife to work with them and make it our own youth group. Recently, the most important thing I've been teaching them is how to have their own testimonies even at their current ages.

We have even discussed how to use serving as a way to invite others to see Christians in action. "Nothing is more rewarding and fun than serving others. This is especially true when Christians choose to fellowship and serve as they seek opportunities to point people to Christ."³ With this sentiment it has been easy to get these young people to invite others they would not have invited before. They see something happening besides just having fun. Fun is also a good way to invite others, but serving has opened a fellowship between these kids that was not there before we started servant outings.

One of the best examples these kids can learn how to evangelize is actually seeing adults going out to witness and share the gospel with others. Not only must there be a verbal approach, but they must see we are actively working in our ministries. Fay states, "A good deed is much like electricity: it may help someone see the light."⁴ Sometimes people just need to see someone loving on them instead of hearing about it. Lately, most non-Christians criticize

³ Dave Earley and David Wheeler, *Evangelism Is...: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B&H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), 153.

⁴ William Fay with Linda Evans Shepherd, *Share Jesus without Fear* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 118.

Christians for saying they love people but have shown nothing to support these claims.

The other ministry that also evangelizes the community and city is Extreme Evangelism, Inc. which was setup by my late friend. This ministry uses a school bus that has been entirely gutted and reconfigured to be an opened style stage with over 1,000 watts and a rack mount mixer with amps and all sound equipment, including a music server. This bus has a generator large enough to run a home which allows us to continue to run this sound as we travel through neighborhoods. We believe that this tool is great for reaching the communities that never attend church. “When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world.”⁵ By no means are we perfect, but as we go out we believe we are carrying Christ’s banner and believe that it is important to carry this banner so that other’s see Jesus’ love and kindness.

As for a vision of what God is going to do for the future of my ministry I am currently unaware. There have been prayers for guidance in this area so that the Lord would make known what he has for me in upcoming ministry opportunities. Recently, I was allowed the privilege of joining the Gideons which allows me to make new relationships which I believe God is using for me to take into my future ministry. I rest on the words from *The Power of the Call* for my ministry and its future, “I settled in my heart that, since God’s very nature is perfect love, He

⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), 176.

could never relate to me at any time except in perfect love. This meant God would always bring me His best.”⁶ This only proves that wherever God leads He will provide the faith to remain in that ministry or the ability to change the areas that need to be changed.

One of the desires of my heart for ministry has been for some time to evangelize through apologetics; something similar to what Ravi Zacharias does in his ministry. I have always enjoyed defending the Christian faith, though God needs no defense, I tend to gravitate toward 1 Peter 3:15. This verse is one which more Christians need to adhere to in their lives instead of being rail-roaded in conversations. On the other hand we must remember the latter portion of the verse about defending in love without getting red-faced or loud and obnoxious.

The desire for this type of apologetic ministry came about after realizing that one of the ministries I enjoyed as a youth has all but disappeared. When I was in youth we had numerous traveling evangelists that would come for ‘revivals’ for a long weekend and they were captivating to me. This is where my heart’s desire was when I was younger, but have recently realized that this type of ministry is no longer being used. So my attention turned to Ravi Zacharias’ ministry which kept a similar format to ministry where he speaks in different locations about Jesus Christ.

However, the difference is Ravi is able to speak to more non-believers than most traveling evangelists were ever able to even when people invited those who were lost. I long to

⁶ Henry T. Blackaby and Henry Brandt, *The Power of the Call* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1997), 177.

be used of God in a big way and realize this is only possible by staying in communion with Him in a consistent manner. In *Spiritual Leadership* it defends this by stating, “Besides the intrinsic and immeasurable value of knowing God personally, a strong relationship with God holds numerous advantages for leaders. They clearly know when God is speaking to them.”⁷

For years now I have known that God has called me into the ministry in some sort of capacity. Since then it took me years to surrender to God’s call and now it has been even more difficult to find my specific ministry once I graduate. The typical church may or may not be where the Lord has called me at least in the definition of typical. The Lord has blessed me with the gift of discernment. This is great when having the ability to select people on a board or in a church, but currently the Lord has put me in positions where these have already been chosen. When the time comes I pray the Lord will give me the insight on who to choose with the gift He has given me. Aubrey Malphurs describes leadership this way, “My experience in working with churches as well is that if the senior pastor doesn’t have a leadership gift, then often the church moves to a plateau and eventually slips into decline.”⁸ Most churches realize that teaching the Word of God is extremely important, but you must have someone who can lead.

The opportunity recently arose where our part time children’s minister felt called to a

⁷ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2001), 251.

⁸ Aubrey Malphurs, *A New Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 42.

church in Texas (we are in Florida), and was going to take the job until they decided they did not want him. During that time he asked if I would consider taking the children's ministry position. The timing did not feel right and the leadership of our church is somewhat weak and non-discerning. So I was going to let them know that I did not feel that God was calling me into this position, but before I could he let me know that he was staying and now full-time children's pastor. I had to laugh to myself, because this is not the first time he has asked me something like this only to jump the gun and it not work out. The Lord is sovereign.

As for church and ministry I am just about anything but conventional. It seems people and even younger adults are reverting back to strong rituals and symbolism. "Instead of being turned off by the rich symbolism of the Christian faith, an increasing number find it to be surprisingly relevant, especially if it engages both their minds and their emotions."⁹ This sentiment has also been reiterated by many evangelists and more churches are finding that it is good to include some rituals in worship, but making certain not to make those rituals become replacements for worshiping the one true God.

The ability to mold the church to the ever changing technological advances while maintaining the truth of the Word is one of the best ways to keep people engaged. I remember a year ago I was talking about how technology in the church became distracting too many times

⁹ Elmer Towns, et al., *11 Innovations in the Local Church* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2007), 100.

and how it was just a crutch most pastors used. My friend, and our associate pastor, quickly corrected me and stated we must remember not to let technology become our crutch, but without it we lose touch with an increasingly forward thinking culture.

As for current ministry the Lord has given me two very good ministries and at some point will likely call me to something more formal where leadership will be required. My focus is to use the gifts I have now and the ministries I have been gifted with to reach the lost people around my city and region for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have not been as deeply in prayer about my future calling as I should be, mostly probably because of my fear of the unknown. I did not grow up in the typical Christian home so finding my footing is still new to me and my wife. McManus explains my sentiments the best,

He tells you to take courage. You are inspired and overwhelmed to go where no one has gone before. You enter an experience only possible when you are moving towards Jesus. Then it happens. You see the invisible. Peter walked on water, and that's strange enough. But then he saw the wind! Not the waves. Not the effects of the wind. He saw the wind! And then he was afraid. To follow Jesus is to engage the invisible. To lead the church is to advance the invisible kingdom. And so much becomes visible. You begin to see the gates of hell. You begin to see the powers and principalities. You begin to see the field, white to harvest. You begin to see the wind that rages against any who dare to follow Christ. Who will not shrink back? Who will become an unstoppable force? Only those who see the invisible!¹⁰

I know that God does not give us the spirit of fear, but trusting in someone besides yourself is scary when you have been taught that you are your own provider. My current evangelism style

¹⁰ Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 37.

is making certain that people experience Jesus not just hear about him. This comes from being a servant ministry supporter; this is actually how I met my wife. Now it has become the best way to meet the lost and lead them to the Lord and bring them to church. Until I have my own full-time ministry I will continue to evangelize everywhere I go.

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