



Healthy outreach is the product of many things, not just one. This series looks at dynamics involved in building a healthy outreaching culture in a local church. Each article offers insights with practical action steps and support resources. This is about helping local churches to bear fruit.



An encouragement and challenge to our local church preachers



DEVOTIONAL TRAINING FOR LEADERS

Reviving the art of gospel preaching

Might the key to a revival in our gospel preaching be in a reviving of the vision of our hearts?

Acts 2:40 says this...

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation".

- How often do we 'plead' with audiences to consider Christ like Peter did?
- How often do we warn audiences of the peril that awaits if they reject Christ?
- diplomacy and gentleness are good things, might we have lost our gospel vigour as Kiwi Christians?

Charles H Spurgeon articulated this same point as follows:

"Preach, for instance, as you would plead if you were standing before a judge, begging for the life of a friend, or if you were appealing to the Queen herself on behalf of someone very dear to you. Use the kind of tone in pleading with sinners that you would use if a gallows were erected, and you were to be hanged on it unless you could persuade the person in authority to release you. That is the sort of earnestness you need in pleading with men as ambassadors for God".

(The Soul Winner, by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Pg 94)

- **At the heart of this, might our 'fear of man' have become greater than our fear of God?**
- **For a different thought - might our 'fear of man' have become greater than our SIGHT of those who do not know Christ?**

In Matthew 9:35 it says Jesus 'SAW' the crowds...

- This was not referring to his sight of their physical form. He instead 'saw' their spiritual condition ('harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd').
- Can we SEE the desperate spiritual need people have for a connection with God through Christ which 'the gospel' is the explanation of?
- Or might we have become so fearful of being misunderstood or even judged for trying to 'scare people into the faith' that we shy completely away from any 'pleading' or honestly expressed passion - as if we no longer believed our own message?

These are challenging questions!

If we are going to change this, here are three small pieces of vital teaching.

Remember: The gospel message has a SPECIFIC content

While there is a specific message to communicate, compelling gospel preaching is something of an 'art' because communication is about a lot more than a list of propositional truth statements.

However, to start somewhere, we do need to define the core tenants, or points, of the gospel.

These could be worded in various ways. For one easy approach based on Peter's preaching in Acts 2 and 3 consider these 5 words:

- 1. Creation**
- 2. Fall**
- 3. Redemption/Jesus**
- 4. Restoration**
- 5. Evidence (It would seem most of his message was evidence in both cases).**

An alternative outline could be:

- 1. Love**
- 2. Sin/Separation**
- 3. Jesus**
- 4. Evidence**
- 5. Choice.**

Sometimes a Christian or leader might THINK they have communicated the gospel because they talked about Jesus - when in reality they have only communicated a part the message, possibly failing to communicate it at all.



Remember: You haven't COMMUNICATED if it wasn't said with HEART!

Beyond its necessary 'content' the gospel is also a personal message - which means something. A message is about more than words. It is sometimes only actually communicated when done so with a comprehension of the compelling love story it is while also of its sobering gravity!

To consider some balances - on the one hand the gospel really is a 'legal contract'. Theologically this is called substitutionary atonement. Christ died for us, in our place. This is a theologically true analogy.

However, it is also a love story - with an act of great personal sacrifice purposed to enable a restored relationship. As is written in our Easter gospel booklet's text - it's not only a ticket to a movie with popcorn (a positional transaction). It comes with an obligation to go to the movie while eating the popcorn (a relationship that needs engaging with, and a Lord who needs obeying).

Both analogies therefore convey aspects of the message that are true. It isn't one or the other. In summary of the paradox or balance this brings to gospel preaching:

- **Heart without truth is irresponsible.**
 - This definitely happens. Many 'gospel preachings' in churches never actually share the gospel.
- **Truth without heart isn't really the message - even though God's Spirit can still anoint truthful words that we state with very little comprehension of their compelling urgency.**
 - Imagine a person saying "I love you" with no meaning.
 - While the words are right, their meaning might be lost to the person hearing them.

As a statement:

Our HEARTS and MINDS must both be FULLY ALERT AND ALIVE, COMPREHENDING the truth and gravity of the message we speak before we can TRUTHFULLY and COMPELLINGLY communicate it!

Finally: Here are FIVE keys to an effective evangelistic message

...because the above didn't cover points 1, 2 and 5. In summary of an article (You can read the full article at AllTogether.co.nz/five-keys-effective-evangelistic-message/):

1. Prayer and faith are necessary

If we don't believe for a harvest the mystery is that we might not get one.

2. Non-believers must be present

It isn't automatic that this happens. Leadership, promotional and people skills are involved.

3. A certain content needs covering

Just talking about Jesus isn't enough. The gospel has a specific content.

4. A connection with the audience is necessary

It is the communicators job to actually communicate - which requires a sense of 'connection' and also heart. Merely stating truth isn't enough.

5. A clear challenge and response opportunity is necessary

If a response hasn't been called for, we haven't communicated the gospel!!



THE CHALLENGE

In summary:

The Apostle Paul said, "The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11).

- There is always an urgency with the gospel. We must be spiritually awake.

Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." (John 9:4).

- Times and seasons change - and do not last forever.

For application:

- When did you last plead with people to know Jesus? How might you do this? (What might this sound like? How might doing this be worded?)
- Might some of us have lost our actual belief in the gospel - leaving us unable to communicate it in a compelling way?
- Might some of us have lost our 'sight' of the lost multitudes and their condition, leaving us unable to speak in a compelling manner?

How, now, might you work to convince your audiences of the truth and reality of the 'full' gospel message?



IF YOU'D LIKE TO EQUIP MEMBERS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL ITSELF HERE ARE SIMPLE RESOURCES:

- **5min video + discussion** - to equip members AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members/
- **Printable PDF article** - 1-page long for pastors - Outreach Today Chapter 2 -Knowing our own message. Which can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/printmaterial/
- **Pulpit + small group** - A simple and clear four-week pulpit and small group resource titled "Gospel Equipping". Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies/#S&S7
- **Online article** - ..specifically on Peter's gospel preaching in Acts 2 & 3 which you will find at: AllTogether.co.nz/peters-gospel-preaching-and-our-shame/