



Evangelism

Module 3 - Task 3

JOURNAL ENTRIES ON THE MOTIVATION FOR EVANGELISM

We have mentioned already in this course that contemporary studies of evangelism show a growing hesitancy on the part of Christians to share the gospel with others. This is a disturbing trend in a time when all of us are seeing the decline of Christianity in our neighborhoods and workplaces. Now more than ever we need people who are motivated and bold in evangelizing.

Read this summary of a Lifeway Research survey of beliefs about evangelism and commitment to evangelism conducted in 2012. Then look at a Barna research study from 2013 that looks at the willingness of specific denominations and age groups to share the gospel.

What stuck out to you about the general statistics from these two studies on evangelism?

In the second article, what hope does the author offer for the future of evangelism?

What is interesting about these developments is that other studies have indicated that our rapid decline into a post-Christian culture may actually offer new opportunities for the gospel. Even as people increasingly have no history with the Christian faith or no cultural memory of when Christianity was the default American religion, they are still open to hearing about the gospel from friends who are willing to share their faith. Read this summary of another survey that looked at these trends: *Your Unchurched Friends Want to Know About Your Faith.*



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What was surprising to you about the trends tracked in this study?

What did the study indicate as some of the more effective ways of introducing unchurched people to the gospel?

How do these trends encourage you in your own efforts to share the gospel?

In the passage we have been looking at in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul provides a clear contrast to our contemporary struggle to share the gospel with others. Paul is controlled or compelled (2 Corinthians 5:14) to share this message of God's reconciling love in Christ with others. So constrained and compelled is he to share this message that in Romans 9 he says that he, a Jew, so longs for his own Jewish people to know Christ that "I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren" (Romans 9:3). Paul could also say that he had expended every means he had in order to bring those he encountered to Christ: "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).



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Paul tells us that at the heart of his deep motivation to share the gospel is his own experience of the love of Christ. Paul's ministry of reconciling others to God mirrored his own encounter with the gospel's reconciling power (2 Corinthians 5:18). He had personally known the reality that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The "why?" for Paul's efforts in evangelism was that he had miraculously been saved, and as a result he could not help but share the story of his own encounter with the gospel.

When we see the full implications of what happens when we accept the gospel and are reconciled to God through Christ it should motivate us, like Paul, to share the gospel. In fact, you could say that all of the deep theology we find in Paul's letters can be traced back to the reality of Paul's encounter with Christ and his experience with the life-changing power of the gospel. View Dr. Evans' video response to the following question: "What does the gospel accomplish in the life of someone who receives Christ?"

So, what's your gospel story? Not all of us may have the same kind of dramatic experience that Paul had on the road to Damascus, but anyone who has come to faith in Christ can draw from that experience as motivation-as their "why?" for evangelism. How did you come to faith in Christ?

How have you seen the gospel continue to impact and transform your life?

An open book with a heart shape formed by the pages. The word "Evangelism" is written in white text across the top of the book.

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We can see Paul returning to his conversion story again and again and retelling it to different audiences. He gives versions of it in Acts 22:3-21; Acts 26:2-20; Galatians 1:11-24; Philippians 3:2-11; and 1 Timothy 1:12-16. The key is that Paul was able to easily retell his story in a compact way, and draw on that story to address different people and varying circumstances as he shared the gospel.