

Series: Going Public with Your Faith (Part 6)

Celebration Service

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Starting Point

In the Introduction to the book, the authors started by saying, "I want my life to count. I don't want to look back at the end and think I wasted it."

What could be more rewarding than to realize that God allowed us to play a role in the lives of people in their spiritual journey?

Are you ready to commit your life to making spiritual investments in the lives of people you know?

Scripture

Ephesians 5:15-16

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Mark 13:11

Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:26-31, 35

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." ³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. ³¹"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.... ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Focus

Some believers have a life goal of "Going to heaven when I die and taking as many people as possible with me." Those who are most effective in achieving this realize that evangelism is organic, not mechanical. It is not an event, but a process. Believers must discover what God is already doing in someone's life and to join that effort.

Bill Kraftson of Search Ministries observes that each Christian who encounters a non-Christian is like a link in a chain. "It's great to be the last link in the chain, but it's not more important than any other link."

We must not ignore the fact that cultivation is required, but neither can we ignore the fact that others, and the Holy Spirit Himself, may already have been at work in the cultivation phase when we arrive on the scene in someone's life.

This is the case with the Ethiopian Eunuch. Our role is to ask questions, and like Philip, determine the readiness of the person to take another step toward God.

A George Barna study indicates that two thirds of unchurched adults want to experience God in a deeper and more tangible and significant way. We are mistaken when we believe the lie that people don't want God. Many do and are just waiting on us to tell them the good news!

Bill Hybels, in the book Contagious Christianity, gives a formula to help believers understand how to have maximum spiritual impact in the lives of non-Christians. His formula for maximum impact (MI) is: $HP + CP + CC = MI$.

HP is High Potency – We must be living the Christian life.

Close Proximity – We must be around non-believers.

Clear Communication – We must be able to share the gospel.

Being a person of spiritual influence is every Christian's calling, not just the responsibility of a gifted few. Your spiritual responsibility is not filled by just warming a pew on Sunday morning. The early church did not depend on professional evangelists. The evangelists of the first century were the nameless thousands of men and women who followed Jesus without fanfare or notoriety.

But even the Apostles were quite ordinary men. Before they were biblical heroes, they were someone's neighbor just trying to make a living. They were regular people who moved beyond their fears in order to become a spiritual influence in the lives of others. Like those ordinary people, God is calling us out of the pew and into the lives of people. Are you ready to take the challenge?

Truths to Remember

1. In order to become a spiritual influence, we've got to make intentional decisions about what we prioritize in life.

Prioritize – To do the important things in life, some of the busyness has to go. A daily time with God is a good time of life re-evaluation and prioritization.

2. Before we are able to "make the most of every opportunity, we must accept our God-given role to be spiritual influencers.

Accept – If we really believe that evangelism is commanded of God, the issue then is our obedience. Some of us shudder at the thought of sins of commission, but are unphased by our sins of omission.

3. While we should prepare to clearly communicate the gospel, we must also trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us in what to say.

Prepare – See John 14:26. The Holy Spirit will teach us and remind us. Do we really trust the Spirit to give us words?

4. In order to be used greatly by God, we've got to listen intently and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit

Listen – Q: How loudly does the spirit speak? John 10:27 “my sheep know my voice.”

5. God often works upstream in the lives of non-believers to prepare them to hear the gospel.

Upstream – Q: Have you experienced God working upstream evangelistically? Q: Does this take pressure off of us?

6. God uses ordinary people to communicate His extraordinary plan for mankind.

Ordinary – The disciples were the nasty job/uneducated/hourly worker men of their day.

Q: Do we struggle to believe that God can use us? God is probably less likely to use those of us who have it all together!

Questions for Discussion

1. If people will look back on life and have a different set of values then, wishing they had lived life differently, what keeps us from being able to value those same things in life now?

Possible: We don't stop, slow down, prioritize and live it out. (See #1 above.)

2. Have you had the opportunity this week to be any part in the chain of someone's possible faith in Christ?

<Personal answers> This can be a faith flag, a good deed, a spiritual conversation, maybe even just living it out.

3. What part of the formula $HP + CP + CC = MI$ is most challenging to you personally?

4. Why do you think many in churches today are so dependent on professional clergy to do all of the witnessing? What factors keep that from being a feasible plan?

People feel clergy will get it right. Not a good plan because the clergy often don't have Close Proximity or earned trust.

5. How do you react to the statement that two thirds of unchurched adults want to experience God in a deeper way? Why would this not seem true?

<Personal answers> The really bad of our society gets the attention. There are many who are quietly living without God.

The Big Challenge

1. Prayer Walk -- Do a prayer walk this week of at least 30 minutes in your neighborhood, your work place, or somewhere else that you can be a spiritual influence. Pray for God to be at work in the lives of people and for you to exhibit a desirable life before them.

2. Life Goals – Consider your life goals and how evangelism fits in to that. Put some things in writing to keep you on track.

3. Accountability – As this study ends, it may be easy to forget about your commitment to be a spiritual influence. If you don't have one, enlist an accountability partner to share your spiritual journey with. Read Hebrews 10:24-25 in regards to encouragement.