



One Size Fits All... NOT!

Acts 17:1-4

MISCONCEPTIONS

One of the biggest barriers to effective evangelism is the problem of misconceptions. Because of this, the dreaded "E Word" fills them with fear and guilt.

To illustrate the kinds of perception problems I'm referring to, let me call in one of my key witnesses: You.

For example, what comes to your mind when you think of the word "evangelist?" Many people immediately conjure up memories of infamous televangelists, known primarily for extracting large amounts of money from their well-meaning followers. Or they think of some pushy, obnoxious person that will get in your face. If so, you're not alone.

In fact, James Patterson and Peter Kim wrote a book entitled, *The Day America Told the Truth*. The book reports that when a national survey asked respondents to rank various professions for their honesty and integrity, TV evangelists came out almost at the very bottom, below lawyers, politicians, car salesmen, and even prostitutes.

Out of the 73 occupations compared in this integrity rating, only two ended up lower on the scale: organized crime bosses and drug dealers!

So, there you have it. It's easy to understand why so many of us struggle with our perceptions at this point. But I believe it's the scheme of the devil to defeat the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

So it's time for the church to put a stop to it.

LETTING IT LOOK LIKE YOU

How can we do this? By becoming a Contagious Christian. And today I want to add to and understand than that by helping us understand that He wants to use you in a fashion that fits the person He made you to be. God calls us all to spread the same truth, but *not in the same way*.

Some things are marketed to us as "one size fits all". Over the years I've learned that is usually not true. I have fairly big feet, size 12. Many socks are sold as "one-size-fits-all." Hah! And for those of you with size 15, forget it.

And "one-size-fits-all" underwear - I'm not even going there.

There is no such thing as "One Size Fits All Evangelism" either. Instead, He built diversity into the fabric of His body of believers.

Did you know that the Bible shows that there are different "Evangelism Styles?"

Today we will look at the way God equipped six people in the New Testament and in the process, we'll discover six biblical styles of evangelism. And although you will probably use all of them at some time, it is likely that one of them will fit you best. So as we discover each one, ask yourself if it might fit you.

I. ACTS 2:14, 23, 36-39

The Confrontational Approach

Example: Peter

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

It's no secret that Peter was a "Ready-Fire-Aim" kind of guy. Whatever he did, he did it unhesitantly and with full force.

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Is it any wonder God chose him as his spokesman on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**? It was a perfect fit! God needed someone unafraid to take a stand, right there in Jerusalem, the city where Jesus had been crucified a few weeks earlier. He wanted to let the thousands of people who were there know in no uncertain terms that *they'd* crucified the Messiah, and that they needed to call on Him for His mercy and forgiveness.

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As exciting as that historical event was, we need to turn our focus to today. **Do you realize that there are a lot of people in your world who won't come to Christ until someone like Peter holds their feet to the fire?**

Some people are just waiting for a Contagious Christian who won't beat around the bush, but who'll clarify the truth of Christ and challenge them to do something about it. Could that Christian be you? Do you resonate with Peter's approach?

It's not hard for you to look people directly in the eye and ask them where they stand. I know we have some people in this congregation who fit into this style.

Some well-known people who have this style include Chuck Colson and, in his own unique fashion, Billy Graham.

If you think this approach is for you, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to know how, when, and where to direct your words and challenges, as well as the wisdom you'll need to do it with an appropriate mix of grace and truth.

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man, with Matthew, and now with this woman from Samaria. And, as you get more involved in personal outreach to others, you'll probably feel this way about yourself. I sometimes look at God's activity of touching people through me and say to myself, "Who'd have ever thunk it!" God seems to delight in using ordinary, everyday kinds of people in surprising and exciting ways.

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You have heard me share what recent polls show: for example, that 50 to 80% of the adults in the United States would go to church if a friend would just invite them. Think about it: at least half of your friends would be willing to join you!

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People who take this approach find it relatively easy to serve others. It's how God made them. They naturally notice needs others don't see, and they find joy in meeting them, even if they don't get a lot of credit for it. Often more quiet types, these people enjoy expressing compassion through tangible forms of action.

Though this style tends to get less press than the others, and it can take a much longer period of time before producing spiritual results, it's one of the most important of all the evangelistic approaches. That's because service-style evangelists touch people nobody else can reach.

You may not have the knowledge of Paul or the courage of Peter and the Samaritan woman. But you're a whiz at making meals or fixing cars. I hope

you can see how those things, and so many others like them, can be done in a way that points people to God.

BEING YOURSELF

I hope you've been encouraged as we've uncovered these different approaches to spreading the faith. Maybe you've breathed a sigh of relief as you've realized that you can be yourself, and that God knew what He was doing when He made you.

Let me emphasize that nobody fits perfectly into just one of these approaches. In fact, you'll probably find opportunities to use all of them. The point is that God designed diversity on His team; and each member is stronger in some approaches than in others. You might come up with approach number seven or eight, and that's fine, too.

The important thing to know is that the most Contagious Christians are those who've learned to work within the design God has given them - for those of you who are planning to come to the Contagious Christian Workshop, which begins next Wednesday night, you will get a self-evaluation questionnaire that will help you find out what your primary evangelism style is. To develop it and learn the things to look out for.



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She was, in effect, a quiet practitioner of what we're calling the service approach to evangelism. It would have been very hard for people to observe her activity and not get a glimpse of the love of Christ that inspired her. In fact, her work was so important that when she died a premature death, God sent Peter to raise her from the dead and put her back into service!

People who take this approach find it relatively easy to serve others. It's how God made them. They naturally notice needs others don't see, and they find joy in meeting them, even if they don't get a lot of credit for it. Often more quiet types, these people enjoy expressing compassion through tangible forms of action.

Though this style tends to get less press than the others, and it can take a much longer period of time before producing spiritual results, it's one of the most important of all the evangelistic approaches. That's because service-style evangelists touch people nobody else can reach.

You may not have the knowledge of Paul or the courage of Peter and the Samaritan woman. But you're a whiz at making meals or fixing cars. I hope

you can see how those things, and so many others like them, can be done in a way that points people to God.

BEING YOURSELF

I hope you've been encouraged as we've uncovered these different approaches to spreading the faith. Maybe you've breathed a sigh of relief as you've realized that you can be yourself, and that God knew what He was doing when He made you.

Let me emphasize that nobody fits perfectly into just one of these approaches. In fact, you'll probably find opportunities to use all of them. The point is that God designed diversity on His team; and each member is stronger in some approaches than in others. You might come up with approach number seven or eight, and that's fine, too.

The important thing to know is that the most Contagious Christians are those who've learned to work within the design God has given them - for those of you who are planning to come to the Contagious Christian Workshop, which begins next Wednesday night, you will get a self-evaluation questionnaire that will help you find out what your primary evangelism style is. To develop it and learn the things to look out for.