

## Every Christian is a Missionary P3



*"No one can say: 'Since I'm not called to be a missionary, I do not have to evangelize my friends and neighbors.' There is no difference, in spiritual terms, between a missionary witnessing in his home town and a missionary witnessing in Katmandu, Nepal. We are all called to go—even if it is only to the next room, or the next block." – Thomas Hale (On Being A Missionary).*

[1.- 3. DISCUSSED]

4. That one must share the gospel in order to effectively and faithfully evangelize others should be a given (Rom 10:14-15 – “good news” = the gospel – see v16). However, what is not so easily discerned, is that oftentimes (most of the time?) there are other things also necessary to being effective and faithful missionaries for Jesus – especially concerning America today. Fortunately for us, they are the same things that were frequently required in the first century as well. That being said, the following represents what else was necessary/required to be an effective and faithful missionary<sup>1</sup>. As missionaries (sharing the gospel):

### **4.1. We must also be DELIBERATE.**

We must view our relationships w/unbelievers as those God has placed in our lives for the purpose of sharing the gospel. In this respect then, our agenda w/them is deliberate unto this end – to evangelize them (1Co 9:23; Eph 5:11-18; Col 4:5; Phi 1:27-30). What this means also, is that we are taking the time to create relationships w/unbelievers (e.g. Luk 5:27-32).

### **4.2. WE must also be ADAPTIVE.**

When we share the gospel, it should be adapted (i.e. customized in its presentation not essential content) to the person or situation we are dealing with (Col 4:6 – “seasoned w/salt” = aware of their views and adapting what you say so that it directly addresses where they are currently at).

### **4.3. We must also be CONVICTING.**

When sharing the gospel, we must never leave out the other thing necessary to their conversion: repentance. (IOW): We must also discuss that person’s need to repent of sin (i.e. confess and forsake their sins/sinful behavior – Pro 28:13) and the coming judgment of Christ (Mar 1:14-15; Luk 3:7-8; Act 17:30-31; Act 2:38, 41). The reason discussing these subjects is so important is b/c this is what the Holy Spirit uses to convict them – i.e. to prepare their hearts for genuinely receiving the good news of the gospel (Joh 16:8).

### **4.4. We must also be CULTURAL.**

To be cultural means that we are relating to (integrating and infiltrating) their given culture, rather than isolating ourselves (or children) from it. (1Co 9:19-23 w/11:1).

### **4.5. We must also be a close FRIEND.**

The majority of those who come to Christ, are not the result of “drive-by” evangelism (e.g. street preachers, door-to-door solicitors), but the witness of a close friend. Becoming a close friend to the lost, should therefore also be what we as Christians are committed to in our endeavor to be faithful and effective missionaries.

### **4.6. We must also be REASONABLE.**

Though God’s Word and ways may (at times) seem weird – or even scary, they are instead incredibly reasonable to how He has made us. Therefore, one of the most important tasks in sharing the gospel is demonstrating its reasonableness (e.g. Mat 21:33-43; Phi 4:1; e.g. gospel demands gain and maintain w/marriage).

### **4.7. We must also be RESPECTABLE.**

From the standpoint of missions, it is not enough to simply infiltrate our culture through the process of integration w/our culture. We must also be able to influence them. This however will not happen unless they respect us<sup>2</sup>. Hence why we are called to be respectable/dignified and honorable not just before God but by our culture (1Ti 3:2, 8, 11; Rom 12:17; 2Co 8:21). From the perspective of the culture this means where there is no conflict w/His Word, God is calling us to adopt those qualities, careers, lifestyles, etc. the culture views as respectable. Likewise, we are to do the same in jettisoning those things the culture does not find respectable (1Co 9:19, 22). From the perspective of God, being respectable also means honoring/respecting Him above all else through faithful obedience to His Word (Psa 101:6; Isa 66:2; 1Sa 2:30). People are drawn to those Christians (and churches) who demonstrate strong respect and obedience to God and repelled by those don’t (Act 5:1-14; 1Jo 2:10; Jud 1:18-19). If our discernment is lacking in this area, the God-ordained place to look is the leaders in the church (Heb 13:7) as well as pop culture – what kind of people does it make fun of? This includes discerning between what the culture sees as acceptable versus respectable. Ignoring or neglecting to pursue what is respectable in our culture is not only contrary to our missionary identity (as “all things to all people...”) but also the gospel (Luk 4:18-19 = following Jesus promotes freedom from impoverished living; e.g. visible tattoos as “ghetto” – enslavement to poverty. In America today, visible tattoos are not seen as respectable and therefore drastically lessen the number of career and advancement opportunities available to that person. As such, rather than promoting freedom from poverty – they become a tool unto enslavement; an aspect of the ghetto that is contrary to the gospel. Therefore, though this may be where/what God saves us from, this is not what we are to be proud of or pursue. Instead, we are to regard such things as symbols of our former ignorance and shame; as unwanted vestiges of a kingdom we no longer find our identity/citizenship in – 1Co 6:19-21; Col 1:13 w/Phi 3:19-20). Christianity has in large, lost touch w/this truth and as a result is losing ground to those false religions where respectability is pursued (e.g. Mormonism – fasting growing religion on the planet).

<sup>1</sup> For those under the faulty impression that what we do doesn’t matter since God is sovereign in salvation consider that Paul did not view it that way. He saw himself/his actions as key to others’ salvation (1Co 9:19-21 – “that I might win more of them...that I might save some”; see also 2Ti 2:10).

<sup>2</sup> Influence is so closely associated w/respect that it is actually a part of its definition: to be regarded as worthy of influence.

#### **4.8. We must also pursue BEAUTY<sup>3</sup>.**

In ancient times, beauty was considered a part of what was called the sacred “triumvirate” or “eternal verities” or “transcendentals” – those attributes most virtuous to God and man<sup>4</sup>. This was true even for the Church. As a result, the majority of her existence has been marked by the pursuit of beauty in all things. As such, the Church before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, produced some of the most beautiful architecture, music, sculptures and paintings the world has ever known. The Church has also been responsible for establishing the economic system most conducive to creative thinking, innovation and expression – the intellectual tools of better living and beautification (i.e. Capitalism)<sup>5</sup>. And again, all of this was because of the Church’s view and pursuit of beauty. What however is most intriguing about the Church’s view and pursuit of beauty during this time, was its connection to the gospel. All of her efforts in this way, were ultimately for the purpose of winning people to Christ. In other words, the Church of the prior centuries understood that the pursuit of beauty was key to faithful and effective evangelism. Today, in a weird “twist of fate”, the Church has neglected or rejected such wisdom and the world (and false religion) have become its new owners. Is it any wonder then, why we are said to be living in a post-Christian world? Or that so many are flocking to those religions where beauty is still pursued? If then, we are to be faithful and effective, this (too) is what we must get back to pursuing.

#### **4.8.1. Why is the pursuit of beauty so key to evangelism?**

##### **4.8.1.1. b/c it best reflects the gospel.**

What makes the gospel “good news” is the fact that God - through His work in redeeming/saving/restoring us is also in the process of redeeming/saving/restoring the rest of the created order to its original place of beauty (Gen 1:31 – “good” = beautiful; also Gen 2:8 – “Eden” = paradise; Rom 8:18-23 w/1Co 15:43 w/2Co 5:17 w/Rev 21:5, 22:1-3). This is why God’s house was (and still is!) to be marked by beauty (Exo 28:2, 40; Hag 1:1-10, 2:1-9; Psa 50:2, 96:6 w/Psa 27:4; Rev 19:7-8; also 1Co 14:40). Imagine then, the message that is sent to others when we neglect the pursuit of beauty. Our churches and lives become poor (or distorted) mirrors of the gospel. (IOW): We send a confusing and very unconvincing message (consider: Rom 10:15 – “how beautiful are the feet of him who preach good news” = same word for beautiful as used in Mat 23:27 and Act 3:2, 10; see the original context in Isa 52:1-7).

##### **4.8.1.2. b/c it is the natural desire of all people.**

From the way we select our spouse to the how we pick a car, house or place to go on vacation, beauty plays a significant role. And that b/c it is a part of the way God designed us. In the words of St. Basil, “*By nature, men desire beauty*”. Scientific studies have shown that beauty even plays a role in how we determine what is safe. If something is beautiful, we tend to view it as also safe. Scripture also attests to this (e.g. Eze 26:20) This of course, also makes us vulnerable to deception (Gen 3:6; Pro 6:23-26; 2Co 11:14). The point however remains true: beauty is what we naturally desire or seek. With that in mind, should beauty not therefore be a part of our evangelistic strategy? Doesn’t this also fit into what Paul is getting at in 1Co 9:23 – “I do it all for the sake of the gospel”? Clearly this was the mindset of Isaiah when prophesying of the New Covenant kingdom to come. Its righteousness *and beauty* would cause the nations (or peoples) to naturally be drawn into marriage w/her (Isa 62:1-5 w/Eph 5:25-27).

##### **4.8.1.3. b/c it is a stronger motivator than truth.**

Affirming our natural desire, confirms also its power of attraction. (IOW): beauty is motivation. We are motivated to have those things which we deem to be beautiful. And (I believe) this motivation is stronger even than the motivation we possess for truth. Others throughout the Church’s history have believed the same. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Calvinist thinker Blaise Pascal writes in his book, “The Art of Persuasion”, “*Every man is almost always led to believe not through proof, but through that which is attractive*”. Does this mean truth does not matter? No, but w/o the demonstration of beauty in such truth – or that such truth leads to beauty, it is not enough to motivate people in its direction. For example, how many were motivated to receive the good news (of abundant life thru Jesus Christ) from a person, whose family, finances, career and home are a mess? Regardless of whether what we say is truth (or not), w/o beauty, there is no motivation to accept what we say. Where however beauty exists, people are motivated to listen! Again consider the Mormon church. Though they possess a false and damning gospel (i.e. a lie), b/c of their pursuit of beauty (e.g. Mormon temple, choir, their emphasis on pursuing beauty in their homes, etc.), people are attracted to their religion. They are winning people through the strong motivator of respectability and beauty (i.e. thru their good theology – not their bad gospel). This truth (beauty as a stronger motivator than truth by itself) is understood and applied throughout the Scriptures. Hence why God doesn’t simply tell people to follow Him (or obey Him) w/o the promise of that which people find beautiful/attractive (Exo 19:5 w/Eze 16:7-14; Exo 3:8 – “good land” = same word as Gen 1:31 for good – meaning beautiful).

#### **4.8.2. What does the pursuit of beauty mean?**

##### **4.8.2.1. Not vanity (superficial beauty) but according to the biblical understanding.**

**4.8.2.2. In all things (relationally: marriage/children/work/church-life; aesthetically: personal appearance/homes/kid’s rooms/office/etc) we demonstrate a pursuit of beauty thru attempting to make them beautiful (Form Fitting Function).**

**4.8.2.3. Rewarding/supporting beauty where we find it (e.g. not always looking for the discount if you can afford things at regular price).**

<sup>3</sup> What is meant by beauty is not the superficial or subjective understanding, but rather according to its biblical definition or components: order (existing in its proper place), symmetry (agreeing w/its proper place), consistency (remaining in its proper place) and wholeness (promoting goodness and glory thru its design). In this sense, beauty is result of form fitting function (Gen 1:31; 1Pe 3:4).

<sup>4</sup> They are: Truth, Beauty and Goodness (or Justice).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the subject of Christianity and the establishment of capitalism see Michael Novak’s article, “How Christianity Created Capitalism” at <http://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-10-number-3/how-christianity-created-capitalism>.