

8. Sharing the Gospel Through Clarification

In our last topic, we shared the fact that Christ and the disciples used a variety of approaches to share the Gospel. The last topic focused on sharing the Gospel through confrontation. We saw that confrontation is the key way to approach those who think that they are good and will earn their way to heaven through their own efforts. Today, we will be focusing on how to share the Gospel through clarification.

Clarification is the approach that we see used in Acts 17:11-12, where we read, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” In these verses, we see several key principles about sharing the Gospel through clarification.

First, we see that the Bereans were more fair-minded or noble than the Thessalonians. Here, we see that the people of Berea because of their background were willing to consider things carefully before coming to any conclusions. This caused them to want to find out if the things that they were hearing were true. We might say that they had a “learner’s attitude”. As we talk with people, we need to observe carefully if people are open to search and learn new things. They will not make immediate decisions because they want to know that what they are learning is true and accurate. This was the attitude demonstrated by Andrew and John in John 1:37-39. They wanted to spend time with Christ so that they could learn more about what He was teaching.

Second, we see that the Bereans received the Word with all readiness. The word receive means to accept or embrace the thing that is being spoken or taught. Paul and Silas were teaching the Word of God which was accepted by the people that they were teaching in Berea. In fact, the word readiness means with eagerness or readiness of mind. In other words, they were eager to learn more from the Word of God about the things that Paul and Silas were teaching. Paul and Silas were able to do the same thing Christ had done with the two men on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27, where we read: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Christ on the road to Emmaus and Paul and Silas at Berea were able to go through the Scriptures and explain what the Scriptures taught about Christ.

Third, we see that the Bereans searched the Scriptures. The word translated “search” means *to examine by questions and investigation to determine the truth*. Here, we see that the Bereans were examining the Scriptures to determine if the things that Paul and Silas were teaching were true and accurate. They wanted to know that this is what God actually taught and make certain it was not just the ideas of Paul and Silas. They did not want to be deceived but wanted to know that what they accepted was true.

Fourth, we see that the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily. Here, we see that this process of careful examination took a period of time. They did not make instant decisions. However, what we do see is that they continued their investigation day after day. From this we see that Paul and Silas did not rush for immediate decisions because they wanted the response to be the result of the

conviction of the Holy Spirit and not the result of human pressure. Paul and Silas were willing to study with the Bereans as long as was necessary in order to see them believe. They wanted to make certain that any questions that the Bereans had were answered from the Word of God.

Fifth, we see that the Bereans wanted to find out whether these things were so. The word translated “so” means *to hold fast to or to keep*. As a result, the Bereans wanted to know if the teaching that they were hearing was something that they should obey in their lives. Here, we see that they wanted to know both whether the teaching was true and also whether it was something that should be obeyed. This is a key in making disciples. We want people to know that what they learn is from the Word of God so that it can be trusted. We also want them to know how to obey what they are learning so that they will become obedient Christians when they become Christians.

Sixth, we see that many of the Bereans believed. Of all the approaches used in the New Testament, this was the approach that proved most effective in reaching people for Christ. It also was the approach that proved most effective in helping them have a foundation for then growing to spiritual maturity. We see that this was what Christ did in Matthew 4:23, when, “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Jesus spent much time teaching and preaching in the synagogues throughout Galilee. He knew that if the people would study the Word of God, they would have a true foundation for belief.

Seventh, we see that this is an approach which reached both Jews and Greeks. One of the key things that we need in any evangelistic approach is an approach that is effective in a variety of cultures. This approach reached many Jews and it reached many Greeks. I have had the opportunity to use the evangelistic Bible study with many different tribes and cultures. It has worked effectively with every culture with which I have worked through the years.

Eighth, we see that this is an approach which reaches both women and men. In many cultures today, the churches are composed mostly of women and children. However, we see that this is an approach which will reach many men as well. Men, especially like to get their questions answered and the evangelistic Bible study provides an ideal opportunity for men to ask questions and be led to search the Word of God for answers. As men get their questions answered, the Holy Spirit convicts them (John 16:8-11) and the Father draws them to Christ (John 6:44) because the Word of God brings them to faith (Romans 10:17).

From these verses, we see that an evangelistic Bible study is a key approach used in the New Testament. I usually begin an evangelistic Bible study with the first twelve chapters of Genesis which usually takes about six to eight Bible studies. Genesis 12:1-3 says that one would come from Abram who would bring blessing to all nations. I use that as a point to move to the New Testament to introduce the One who would bring that blessing. Also, during the time we are studying the early chapters of Genesis, I try to determine if those in the Bible study have a fear of evil spirit orientation, communicate through stories and parables or if they have somewhat of a Bible background but have never come to a point of belief. What I have learned about the background of the people in the evangelistic Bible study will determine which Gospel I use:

Mark - for those who have a fear of evil spirits

Luke - for those who learn through stories and parables

John - for those who have a Bible background but have never come to repentance and faith

Matthew - this is an especially helpful book for those of Jewish background

Evangelistic Bible studies are very effective whether they are with one individual, a couple or a small group of people. As a result, this is an approach that anyone can use even if they do not know how to get in front of a group. When Christ called Peter and Andrew to follow Him and said He would make them to become fishers of men (Matt. 4:18-19), he gave Peter a big net (Acts 2:14-41) and he gave Andrew a hook and a line so that he could catch one person at a time (John 1:41, 6:8-9, 12:20-22). The question is not whether we have been given a big net or a hook and line, the question is whether we are obedient to our Great Commission to Make Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Any of us can learn to teach an evangelistic Bible study with at least one person if we choose to yield to the Holy Spirit. As the servant of Abraham said in Genesis 24:27 when seeking a bride for Isaac, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." May the Lord richly bless you as you follow His leading and seek to use clarification to lead people to Christ and help them grow.