

4. Healthy Churches Equip Every Christian for Evangelism

In Acts 8:4, we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Acts 8:1 says that all of the Christians were scattered, except the apostles. Here, we see that Scripture tells us that, in the early church, all of the Christians knew how to share the Gospel and actively shared the Gospel as they were scattered. When all Christians are equipped to share the Gospel, the church is establishing a foundation for reproduction. This brings us to the question, how do we equip every Christian to share the Gospel?

In Mark 1:17, Christ said, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” It is important to notice what Christ did not say, as well as what He did say. Christ did not say, “Follow me, and you might become fishers of men.” Christ did not say, “follow me, and you will feel good.” Instead, what Christ said tells us the commitment He was making to these fishermen. Christ was telling these men that He would make them become something that was presently not true of them.

Christ was promising these men that, if they would follow Him, He would help them become something different than what they already were. We are called to do the same. They were fishers of fish, but Christ said He would prepare them and help them to become fishers of men. The Christians, in Acts 8:4, were all able to preach the Word, because someone had taken the time to help them become something that was not true of them at the time they repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ.

We know that Christ showed those fishermen how to become fishers of men by taking them with Him, so they could see how Christ preached the Gospel. Mark 1:38-39 says, “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” The first thing Christ did, to show the disciples how to become fishers of men, was to take them with Him as He preached the Gospel in all of the towns of Galilee. They had the opportunity to see what Christ taught, hear how He taught and how He answered the questions that were asked. They were shown what to share and how to share it.

However, the people mentioned in Acts 8:4 were not a part of the group that followed Christ as He preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee. We have to go to the book of Acts to see how these believers were equipped to share the Gospel. We are given the first example, in Acts 2:46-47, where we read: “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The hundred and twenty disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15 were going daily to homes of new Christians to break bread (have a meal and communion) with them in their homes.

Communion with new Christians in their homes does several key things. It provides an opportunity to repeat what those new Christians have been taught about the death and resurrection of Christ. It provides an opportunity for new Christians to get their questions answered, so they can learn how to explain the death and resurrection of Christ to others. It shows acceptance of the

family by going to them in their own home. It helps people learn where they are comfortable.

However, it does one other key thing that is even more important. It provides an opportunity to share the Gospel with the rest of the family and friends of the new Christians as the new Christians observe. Those who go along with the person leading this time of communion are also being shown how to begin training new Christians to share the Gospel. Christ gives us some very clear examples of this in the Gospels. Mark 2:14-17 says, “As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

In these verses, we see that Christ did several things as soon as Matthew followed Him:

1. Christ went to the home of Matthew to meet his family and friends.
2. Christ spent time with the friends of Matthew (the tax collectors and sinners).
3. Christ shared with many people who would not hear the Gospel otherwise.
4. Christ showed His disciples how to share the Gospel with Matthew's friends.
5. Christ made it clear that this was an opportunity to invite sinners to repentance.
6. Christ gave us an example of how to train new Christians to be able to explain the meaning of repentance and faith to their family and friends.
7. Christ gave the disciples an example to follow, and they followed His example, in Acts 2:46-47 and many other places in Acts.

The disciples also showed the new Christians how to share the Gospel publicly. In Acts 3, Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer. Many Jews were gathered there, as that was the time of the evening sacrifice. Peter and John healed a paralyzed man and then showed many of the new Christians who were there how to share the Gospel publicly with the large crowd of people that gathered in Solomon's porch (the large covered area on the east side of the temple courtyard). After speaking about the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter said, in Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Peter used the opportunity to show the new Christians how to share the message of repentance with large public crowds.

This sermon caused two things to happen. First, many repented of their sin and believed in Christ. Acts 4:4 says, “However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” Second, Peter and John got arrested for preaching the Gospel. This gave the new Christians an opportunity to see how to react to persecution. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” New believers saw that Peter and John responded with boldness, instead of fear, when opposition came.

When they were released by the Jewish religious leaders, Peter and John showed the new believers how to pray when opposition came. Acts 4:29-31 says, “‘Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness, the new believers learned, by example, that the way to deal with opposition was to pray for boldness to share the Gospel.

We equip new Christians to share the Gospel with family and friends by following the examples given in the book of Acts. In Acts 10:24, Peter showed six Christians from Joppa how to share the Gospel with the household of Cornelius, his relatives and friends. That verse says, “And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.” Acts 10:27 says, “And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.” The six men from Joppa saw the results, in Acts 10:44, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.”

Many times, Paul, and the team with him, also placed the emphasis on reaching the whole extended household. Two examples are found in Acts 16. Acts 16:14-15 says, “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us.” Here, we see that the whole household became Christians. Then, Acts 16:30-32 says, “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then, they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” Verse 33 goes on to tell us that the entire household became Christians that night.

Christ calls us to equip every Christian to share the Gospel by praying for boldness and showing them what to share and how to share it. We do this, in the homes of new Christians, by sharing with their families and friends in their own homes. We equip growing Christians by taking those Christians with us as we go to the homes of new Christians to share with their families and friends. We also equip growing Christians by showing them how to share the Gospel in public places. We follow the example of Paul, given in Acts 20:20, where he said, “...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house...” May the Lord richly bless you as you show each new Christian, by your example, how to share the Gospel.