

Good Versus Not-So-Good Evangelistic Literature

What is good evangelistic literature and what is not-so-good? That is the question we will deal with here. As ambassadors for Christ, it is not a trivial question. In our zeal to win souls, we should be careful that we do not overlook some things that cheapen and weaken the true Gospel of Christ. The Bible says we are to be holy even as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16) and to be blameless (2 Peter 3:14) and we are to be concerned about the truth (John 18:37). We are also to be in the world but not of it (John 17:14-15) and we are to hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). Considering these things, we should want to use only the most accurate and God-glorifying materials when we are sharing the glorious Gospel of salvation with a lost and dying world. Some criteria for evaluating tracts and other evangelistic literature are listed below. May this information help you and others to expound "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING GOD-GLORIFYING GOSPEL LITERATURE:

1. Is the literature made to be humorous? Does it try to avoid making people feel uncomfortable about their sins? Hell and eternal damnation are not funny and the Gospel and Christ's death on the cross are very serious matters... "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16).
2. Do the tracts ignore God's holiness and righteousness? Good tracts mention God's law (the ten commandments) and the fact that all mankind are lawbreakers and therefore subject to the penalty for breaking God's law: eternity in hell.
3. Do the materials commercialize the Gospel? Do they contain advertisements, as compared to just an address or phone number? When we use literature that has ads and prices, the unsaved think that we are trying to get money from them. Money should never be associated with the Gospel... "freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).
4. Is there wording about what you need to **do** to be saved? In other words, does the literature give people the impression that they are saved just by reading and reciting a prayer? We can't manipulate God into saving us just because we say a prayer and we dare not give anyone that impression. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), so if a person's heart is not broken before the Lord and if they are not truly converted by God, they are still in their sins. Yet people I've met think that they are saved because they said some prayer, even though there was no change in their attitude about sin - no evidence that they are new creatures in Christ.
5. Literature containing pictures and sketches of Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit should be avoided. How can we tell Catholics and other idol

worshippers that it is wrong to have statues, images and 'sacred heart of Jesus' pictures if we use literature that contains similar images? ...

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14) ...

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6:16)... "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4).

6. Some literature can mislead people into thinking that God loves everyone. Only God knows whom He loves. We as Christians cannot truthfully tell some stranger that God loves them because Psalm 5:5 says "thou hatest all workers of iniquity" and Psalm 11:5 says "the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth". Also, we as Christians cannot truthfully tell some stranger that 'Jesus died for you' because only God knows if they are going to be saved. Jesus did not die for people who are going to be in hell forever paying for their sins themselves. If all the sins of all the people in hell were placed on Christ, then the people in hell would not be in hell. They end up in hell because none of their sins were paid for, not just because they did not believe in Jesus (the solitary sin of unbelief). Any and all of a person's sins separate them from God as mentioned in Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2 and elsewhere.

7. Does the literature depict people swearing, mocking God, and depict other kinds of ungodliness such as pictures of men and women that cater to the lust of the eyes? God's holy people should present the Gospel without the use of these things... "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:16) ... "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalm 101:3). We dare not be so desperate to make the Gospel appealing to the unsaved that it loses its edge, its sting, and becomes a new form of entertainment... "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." (Ephesians 5:11-12) ... "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." (Philippians 4:8).

8. Avoid material that may contain lies or unverifiable claims about people or things. For example, there is a tract ministry that produces a tract called "Why Is Mary Crying". That tract says that Mary is in Heaven crying about how Catholics are worshipping her. Mary is in Heaven in glory with the Lord where there is perfect peace. She's not crying and since she is not God she cannot possibly know what every Catholic is doing.

9. Avoid literature containing misleading information about salvation. For example, there is a tract ministry that produces a tract called "Gomez Is Coming" which has a picture on the last page that shows Gomez asking his gang members "Who wants to be saved?". One of the gang members says "we all do" [want to be saved]. Since when can someone speak for anyone else

about wanting to be saved?

10. Avoid literature that over-emphasizes end-time events or containing a lot of speculative information that cannot be proved, like details about a future tribulation period. For instance, tracts referring to a World War Three or tracts showing the Pope as the leader of the world during a future tribulation period. We need to tell people that the end of the world for them could be **today**, if they should die today. No one knows how long they will live so it is important to let people know that "Now is the day of Salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2), not because they could end up going through some tribulation in the future but because they could die tonight.

11. Avoid using tracts that have some kind of salvation formula such as the "Four Spiritual Laws". There is absolutely nothing that a lost sinner can DO to be saved. Salvation is a gift from God, not the result of following certain laws or formulas. Of course a person must "repent and turn to God" (Ezekiel 18:30) but since "there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11), there is no way that a person can repent and turn to God, *until* God puts His Spirit in them as mentioned in Ezekiel 36:26-27. All a lost person can and should DO is cry out to God to have mercy on their soul as the man did in Luke 18:13... "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.". Rather than some formula, it is the Word of God applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit that will make a person realize they are under the wrath of God and that they need God's mercy: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7-8).

12. The literature should primarily use scriptures and not the wisdom of men because... "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17) ... "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Conclusion

The literature should clearly inform people of the fact that they are hell-deserving sinners in desperate need of the only Saviour, Jesus Christ. Avoid materials that neglect to mention the wrath of God and the word 'hell'... "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27). It is a good idea to review evangelistic materials with other believers before deciding to use them... "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). Be sure to include the address of your local church or of some reliable ministry on any literature that you distribute. Christians are called to make disciples, not just converts, and "follow-up" is a major part of the disciple-making process. People need to be able to contact someone if they have questions about your literature or if they need help finding a good

church, etc. And before you go out to compel the lost to come in to God's kingdom, don't forget to: "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest" (Luke 10:2) that He would give the increase and He would receive all the glory, for He alone is worthy "to receive glory and honour and power" (Revelation 4:11).