

A Look At Friendship Evangelism

The term 'friendship evangelism' is in wide use today in Christian churches. What does it mean and is it biblical? That is what we are endeavoring to find out in this study.

1. What is friendship evangelism?

To some people, friendship evangelism is a method of leading people to Christ where you become their friend first, and then and only until then, should you share the Gospel with them. Others believe that friendship evangelism means living such a wonderful life that people will be prompted to ask you how you can live such a life at which point you then share the Gospel with them. There is yet another group of people who believe that friendship evangelism means leading people to Christ strictly by living a life that is a good example without ever verbally sharing the Gospel. These people usually say "I let my life be my testimony". Does the Bible agree with any of these ideas? Let's take a look. To get the proper understanding of this issue we must look at what scripture says about our relationship to the world and to God.

2. Where does the idea come from?

The idea of friendship evangelism probably comes from verses like these:

Luke 7:34 - "The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

Matt 5:44 - "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"

Question: Is the Gospel proclaimed just by outward expressions of concern to people and by just associating with them in a friendly way?

3. How is the Gospel spread?

Somebody has to preach the Word of God to the unsaved sinner and God has to convict the sinner of their sins and convert them by the power of the Holy Spirit...

Rom 10:14-17 - "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them

that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

4. In what way is Jesus a friend of sinners?

He laid His life down for them...

John 15:13 - "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We do that ourselves when we lay down our feelings, our reputation, our comfort, and our lives for those who would ridicule and persecute us for living and SHARING our faith and for preaching and living righteousness and holiness.

What thing did Jesus do all the time, that was the main reason why the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him? In other words, what did he do that insured that he would have to lay down his life for his friends? ... He confronted people with the truth of God's word:

John 18:37 - "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

John 10:32-33 - "Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Matt 21:45-46 - "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."

5. What does the Bible say about becoming friends of those who are not saved?

Doesn't scripture actually warn us against fellowshiping with unbelievers?

Prov 23:20 - "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:"

James 4:4 - "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Eph 5:11 - "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*."

2 Cor 6:14-17 - "14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,"

6. Is an unsaved person more likely to take on habits of a saved person or vice versa?

Or to put it another way, if we are not going to be preaching against sin while we are among unbelievers, then we are - by our silence - condoning it.

Prov 29:3 - "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance."

1Cor 15:33 - "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Luke 6:26 - "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

7. Did Jesus only quote scripture in the synagogues and only among his disciples?

Jesus often taught people by **quoting** scripture.

Mark 7:6 - "He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me."

John 6:31 - "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

8. When we are around the unsaved, should we avoid quoting scriptures so that we won't offend them or turn them off to the Gospel?

What does the Bible say about this?

2Tim 3:16 - "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

Matt 10:27 - "What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops."

9. How can we expect most people to react to the preaching of the Gospel?

How did the Sanhedrin react to Stephen's preaching? Why was Paul beaten, stoned, kicked out of towns and continually under attack? Was it because he forgot to practice friendship evangelism? Or was it because he was faithfully proclaiming the truth of Scripture to God-hating sin-loving people?

John 3:19 - "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

Matt 10:34 - "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household."

John 15:18-20 - "18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

10. Is the Gospel designed to influence people

to become our friends?

Isn't the Gospel designed to offend people who want to remain comfortable in their lost spiritual condition?

Gal 4:16 - "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

Heb 4:12 - "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Jer 23:29 - "*Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?"

11. How urgent is the Gospel message?

Should we be more concerned about making friends than about warning people to flee the wrath of God?

1Cor 9:16 - "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

Jude 1:23 - "And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

12. Will people who enjoy sin and who are enemies of God enjoy being around godly uncompromising Christians long enough for a true friendship to develop?

Probably not. The lost love their sin. That is why they do what they do and live like they live.

Prov 13:19 - "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil. "

Rom 8:7 - "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

13. What does it take to be a friend of the world?

To be a friend of the world, you need to act like them. You need to blend in. You need to either ignore their sin or approve of it and participate in it with them.

Rom 1:28-32 - " 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Prov 14:9 - "Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous *there is* favour."

Gal 5:19-21 - "19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

14. If a person does not know that they are a sinner, how will they know that they need a Savior?

God uses the preaching of His word, primarily the preaching of the Law, to convict and convert sinners, in conjunction with the working of the Holy Spirit.

Rom 3:20 - "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin."

Act 20:27 - "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

15. Does the word 'offence' refer to the same thing in the two verses below?

2Cor 6:3 - "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:"

Gal 5:11 - "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased."

The first instance (2 Cor 6:3) refers to not offending the name of Christ by our bad behavior. The second instance (Gal 5:11) refers to the offense of the Gospel to man's pride, since man wants a gospel of works (i.e. circumcision), not the true Gospel of grace which states that man is a hopelessly lost sinner who cannot contribute towards his salvation in any way whatsoever.

16. What has the Lord commissioned us to do? Make friends?

Is the great commission a command to make friends or a command to call a sin-loving world to repentance?

Mark 16:15 - "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Luke 13:5 - "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"

2Cor 5:18 - "And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Summary

When we share the Gospel, we need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and polite to others. We need to be patient, loving and we need to be good listeners, exercising the fruits of the Spirit. But we must not be deceived into thinking that there is some easy non-confrontational way of telling people that they are lost hell-deserving sinners in desperate need of a Savior. Neither should we be deceived into thinking that people are not ready to hear the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, we are commanded to preach the Gospel, to sow the Good Seed. God will handle the rest. He will give the increase in

His time and His way. We may not feel that we are as thoroughly equipped as we should be to present the Gospel, but that is often because our commitment to prayer and Bible study is not what it should be. Never-the-less, the more we step out in faith, trusting God to use us as His messengers just as we are, the more He will conform us to the image of His Son. Now let us go and *earnestly* contend for the faith!

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"Wordless Evangelism"

The Love Gospel

The Social Gospel
