

Whatever It Takes

Week 1: “Expectations”

Hook

WHATEVER IT TAKES:

Sharing Christ ... Sharing Hope

Main Point: Be obedient to share the Gospel; leave the results to God.

Group Activity

Perception is reality ... or not. In 1938 America was reeling from the Great Depression and was on edge concerning reports of the growing crisis in Europe. This culture of unrest and uncertainty was the backdrop for one of the greatest misunderstandings in recent history. On Oct. 30, 1938, Orson Welles directed a one-hour radio drama based on the 1898 novel “War of the Worlds.” The performance began with music, which was interrupted by fictitious news reports of an alien invasion. To deem the program as convincing would be an understatement. Many listeners missed the announcement that the drama was a farce and consequently some Americans believed that Martians had made landfall in New Jersey. The next morning, newspapers reported heart attacks, attempted suicides, and the exodus of some metropolitan areas. Facing lawsuits, CBS hosted a press conference during which Welles shared that he couldn’t have imagined that America would believe that a war with Mars was actually occurring. However, years later, Welles stated:

“The kind of response was merrily anticipated by us all. The size of it, of course, was flabbergasting.”¹

Discussion Questions

- *Have you ever made a major life decision based on false information?*
- *What are some misconceptions concerning evangelism that might prevent a believer from sharing his faith?*

¹ <http://www.history.com/news/the-war-of-the-worlds-broadcast-75-years-ago>

- *Describe the first time you shared your testimony with a nonbeliever. What are some fears or hesitations that you brought to the encounter? How did reality differ from your expectations?*

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Lesson Summary: Today’s lesson is the first of three in an evangelism series. Lesson one addresses the expectations that a believer should hold concerning the process of evangelism. God’s role is to save the lost; man’s role is to share the Gospel with the lost.

God’s Role

Many fears that surround evangelism could be extinguished if the process were better understood. God’s role in the venture of salvation is clear: God saves people. He desires that no one would live or die separated from Him; He provided a way that everyone could be united with Him; and He draws those who are lost to Himself.

1. God desires that none should perish. 1 Timothy 2:4

God’s desire is that everyone should come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Scripture clearly speaks to the fact that no one was created with the intention that he should be destined for Hell. Although God’s wish is that none should perish, He chooses not to force salvation on anyone. There are different aspects of God’s will; two of these are His “perfect will” (what pleases God) and His “sovereign will” (everything that happens is either permitted or willed by Him). It is God’s perfect will that everyone would be a Christian and yet, in His sovereignty, God allows man to choose or reject Jesus.

- *If God desires that none should perish (His perfect will) why would He give man free will?*
- *Describe the difference between God’s perfect and sovereign will. How does one know God’s perfect will? How does one know God’s sovereign will?*

2. Jesus gave His life so that no one would have to perish. 1 Peter 3:18

In His death and Resurrection, Jesus provided a way for everyone to become a child of God. First Peter 3:18 speaks to the idea of a substitutionary death. What man earned for his sinfulness was death, eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). That sin had to be accounted for; someone needed to pay if the relationship between God and man was to be restored. As a means to accomplish that restoration, Jesus became a sacrifice for man. Although He was sinless, He became sin for humanity so that His righteousness would be transferred to the believer. He took the punishment that man deserved, becoming a

substitute for us. After giving His life on the Cross, Jesus conquered death and rose from the grave; because of Jesus' victory, man can experience a restored relationship with God. Anyone, no matter the depth of his sin, has the opportunity to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

- *How does Scripture connect sacrifice and the atonement of sin?*
- *Why was Jesus' sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of sin?*

3. *The Holy Spirit convicts and draws non-believers to God. John 16:8*

This should be a relief to the anxious evangelist: God does the work for you. The Holy Spirit is the active element that works on the heart of the lost, leading that person to a place where he or she is prepared to commit his or her life to Jesus. John 6:44 shares that no one can simply decide to become a believer, God draws him or her first. Without the movement of the Holy Spirit, the message of the Gospel is foolishness to man (1 Corinthians 1:18). Without the drawing of the Holy Spirit, not even the most skilled speaker could convince someone of the validity of Jesus.

- *How did the Holy Spirit convict you of your sinfulness?*
- *Describe a time when you shared the Gospel with someone who considered it foolishness. If you could revisit that conversation, how would you have addressed it differently?*

4. *Upon the acceptance of Christ, the Holy Spirit regenerates and seals the believer. John 3:6; Ephesians 1:13*

The saving part of salvation is a work of God, not man. No one can work enough to earn himself salvation. Further, no one can work enough to earn salvation for someone else.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. —Ephesians 2:8–9

When someone responds in faith to the free gift of salvation, he is immediately regenerated and sealed by the Holy Spirit, marked as belonging to God.

- *What does it take for a person to get to heaven? Describe some false requirements that man adds.*
- *Instead of grace, imagine that God instituted a works-based salvation. What would be the pros for man? What would be the cons?*

Man's Role

The comforting news in the process of evangelism is that you are not held accountable for the results of the conversation; you are held accountable for your obedience in sharing your faith.

1. *Every believer has a personal account of the Gospel to share.*

Every believer in history has a three-part story: life before Christ, how he or she met Christ and what his life is like now with Christ. Training, strategies and study will certainly assist in becoming excellent in the art of evangelism but every believer, upon moment of salvation, is equipped to share his or her story.

- *What advice would you give to someone who is sharing his faith story for the first time?*
- *What holds back believers from sharing their story?*

2. *Christ-followers are called to share the Gospel. 2 Corinthians 5:18; Matthew 28:16–20*

Christians are called to be ministers of reconciliation, recipients of grace who are charged with sharing that grace with others. Although the Great Commission was charged to a particular group of disciples, the challenge stands for the Church at large: We are to share the hope that we have found.

- *Read Romans 10:17; according to this verse, what role does evangelism play in God's plan to see the lost come to faith?*
- *Some converts who came to faith in closed, unreached nations have been presented with the Gospel in dreams. Why wouldn't this be the Lord's primary method of presenting the truth?*

3. *Believers are responsible for faithfully living out that call. 1 Corinthians 3:5–9*

In 1 Corinthians 3:5–9, the apostle Paul addresses a problem in the church of Corinth: The congregation was giving man credit for God's work. Paul was praised for his skill at evangelism, Apollos lauded for ushering believers toward maturity. But the apostle recognizes that he and Apollos were not the ones who brought about salvation or maturity; only God could produce any kind of spiritual fruit in a person. It was God who saved them. It was God who grew them.

Notice the wording in verse 8: "He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor." Neither Paul nor Apollos would be judged on the results of their work. Instead, the ministers would be held accountable for their diligence in the process of the work. God expected them to invest their lives in sharing the Gospel and raising up new disciples into maturity in the faith. That same expectation is in place for believers today; we are held accountable to faithfully fulfill our call, not to produce results. Bill Bright defines successful evangelism as "taking the initiative powered by the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel and leaving the results to God." You will not be judged on the crops; you will be judged on the labor.

- *Whom did the Lord use to introduce you to Jesus? How did that person influence you?*
- *How would you define successful evangelism?*

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Took



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Class Activity

Break your class into groups of two or three people and distribute the REACH cards. Instruct the learners to prayerfully think of three to five names of people in their circles of influence God has laid on their hearts with whom to share the Gospel. Challenge your class to place the names on the cards, pray for them and commit to continue to do so. Before the groups disperse, challenge them to discuss ways in which they will serve and share with the individuals on their card in the coming weeks.

Lesson Conclusion: God asks the believer to be obedient in sharing his faith; He provides the results.

Challenge

Make a decision for Jesus. Perhaps someone in your class has not made a personal commitment to Christ. Provide an opportunity for those who are lost to pray for repentance. Before class concludes, invite those who might want more information about this decision to speak with you after class.

Share your story. God’s primary method of sharing the Gospel is the Church. Believers are the Church. It is every Christ-follower’s responsibility and privilege to share the hope they have found.

Repent. Some are too ashamed to share their testimony due to unrepentant sin. Do not allow the weight and guilt of sin to prohibit you from being a difference maker in the kingdom of God. Repent and move forward.

Meet, serve and share. Get to know those folks that God has placed around you. Find creative ways to serve the lost in your circle of influence, demonstrating that you care for them. And finally, be bold and share your story of life transformation.