Is Open Air/Street Preaching Biblical? - posted by osandoval, on: 2010/3/10 1:32

Why is it that many Christians are opposed to open air/street preaching? Some common objections are, "We should not shove the truth down anyone’s throat like that." "We should be careful not to be ‘Bible bashers’." "It is unloving g to yell at people we don’t know." "It will only turn people off and away from the Lord." Two principle reasons why many Christians are against open air/street preaching are:

One, they have seen bad examples of preachers on street corners who preach nothing but condemnation and never preach the love and cross of Jesus Christ.

Two, they have been influenced by a popular teaching that says Christians should befriend someone for a long period of time before they can effectively share the gospel with them (a.k.a. "Friendship Evangelism").

In this brief sketch I would like for us look at some Scriptures which speak on the subject at hand, beginning with the Old Testament.

Proverbs 1:20-21 declares, "Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings"

I would like to point out a few Old Testament prophets who clearly seem to have been open air/street preachers:

Isaiah was an open air/street preacher.
In Isaiah 58:1 the Lord says to Isaiah, "Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my peo ple their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins."

Jeremiah was an open air/street preacher.
In Jeremiah 11:6-7 the Lord says to Jeremiah, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; hear the words of this covenant and do them."

Jonah was an open air/street preacher.
In Jonah 3:1-4 we read: "Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. Then Jonah began to go thorough the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them."

Now let’s look at some examples from the New Testament.
John the Baptist was an open air/street preacher.
Matthew 3:1-2 says, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was the greatest open air/street preacher.
Matthew 5:1 tells us, "When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them. And He went on to preach that famous Sermon on the Mount. And there are many other accounts of our Lord preaching to crowds in the outdoors.

The Twelve Apostles were open air/street preachers.
Luke 9:1,6 says, "And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

Philip the evangelist was an open air/street preacher.
Acts 8:5-8 declares, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who
had been paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was much rejoicing in that city."

At this point I would like for us to look briefly at church history, beginning with the protestant reformation. Charles Spurge on said, "Where would the reformation have been if its great preachers had confined themselves to churches and cath edrals? How would the common people have become indoctrinated with the Gospel had it not for those far-wandering ev angelistsÂ…and those daring innovators who found a pulpit on every heap of stones, and an audience chamber in ever y open space near the abodes of men?"

I found an article online which gave a brief history of street preaching, as I am doing here. The article states, "the earlie st protestant reformers necessarily had to be out door preachers, sinceÂ… the churches were at the hands of the papacy (Catholic pope and bishops).

Now letÂ’s consider for a moment the First Great Awakening, which took place in the mid 1700s. The article I just mentio ned states, "After the reformation other great movements were started by street preachers. The Methodist Church, co-f ounded by George Whitfield and John Wesley, is an example of this period. These two were Anglicans, but being banne d from speaking in churches since they were not licensed, they took to Â'field preachingÂ’, boldly proclaiming GodÂ’s W ord to large crowd in streets and markets. They traveled throughout England and the American colonies and were instru mental in the Great AwakeningÂ… The Methodist Church was started by street preachers."

And there are many more examples, even in modern times, of how God has greatly used this method of open air/street preaching. Sadly to say, the Church of today, to a great degree, has forgotten and forsaken this proven biblical method of evangelism. And yet we do see today that God is stirring up many of his people and raising them up to perform this aw esome task of publicly proclaiming His glorious, everlasting gospel. May He continue to stir us up and send us out, and bring a glorious revival in these last days. Of course we also need to seek Him diligently in prayer and in His Word, other wise our preaching will be in the flesh (our own ability and strength) and futile.

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**Re: Is Open Air/Street Preaching Biblical? - posted by HeedWatchmen (), on: 2010/3/10 8:43**

Good Post osandoval!

There are so many things that Satan has attacked in the church today. He tries to give everything of God a bad reputatio n. We need to ignore what others say and simply follow Christ and His example.

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Quote:

"-------------Is Open Air/Street Preaching Biblical?  "

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Very. Christians were outside on the day of Pentecost, and eventually thrown out of the Temple.

Preaching indoors, to Christians, is not evangelism, or, should not need to be evangelism. In fact, wasting time on evan gelism inside church gatherings is one of its most boring attributes, imho.

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**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2010/3/10 11:55**

It would be nice to see more open-air evangelists. I’ve known a few people who say they have the ministry of an evange list, and their denomination bestows the title on them, yet all they do is hop from church to church. One of my friends fro m college was the secretary of an "international evangelist" with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). I asked her if he w ould be willing to come with me some time to UNC Charlotte to preach (about 20 miles from his ministry HQ and home). "Yeah right..." was the response.

He makes at least 2 grand per ministry engagement.
Re: Open Air Preaching - posted by scotsbaker (), on: 2010/3/10 14:42

"No sort of defense is needed for preaching outdoors but it would take a very strong argument to prove that a man who has never preached beyond the walls of his meetinghouse has done his duty. A defense is required for services within buildings rather than for worship outside of them." (William Booth, founder, Salvation Army)


HeedWatchmen said,

"There are so many things that Satan has attacked in the church today. He tries to give everything of God a bad reputation. We need to ignore what others say and simply follow Christ and His example."

Amen brother, you hit the nail on the head. We need to stop listening to the devil's lies and heed the Word of God alone, regardless of the consequences or reputation we may get from obeying God.

Let's petition the Lord of the harvest to raise up many more laborers in these days, many more street evangelists who would fear nothing but God.

We don't need a seminary degree, we don't need to be a learned theologian, or an ordained minister. All we need is the Word of God and the Holy Ghost in and upon us.

It's a simple message that we are to preach, not an eloquent, intellectual discourse. If you have been born of the Spirit and know the way of salvation, you qualify as a preacher of righteousness. May Christ be glorified as we preach His glorious gospel.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2010/3/11 17:39

I have a Christian brother who is very good at fire spinning (Burning wicks soaked in kerosene on the end of chains that you spin around your body.) He will go downtown at some area cities and begin "performing". He and others with him will attract a crowd and then begin to minister to the crowd. Our fellowship even set up a sound system and a couple grills in a small park on the main street in our town where the kids cruise. We had music, gave away free hotdogs, Michael did his fire spinning several times, and we preached the gospel, mingled with the people, shared Christ with them, and saw several saved and many ministered to. Two years in a row we rented booth space at a local city festival and set up something we called the "Tent of Healing Prayer". We simply advertised prayer for anyone who wanted it. We saw miraculous healings, salvations, and ran great competition with the palm reading booth down the fairway. People saw the sign and came to us weeping saying they needed prayer.

Do we need to even ask the question as to whether we should do these things? Let's get out there and minister as representatives of Christ.

I have seen those who stand on the corner and scream that everyone is in sin and going to hell. Not sure how effective that was. It may be the truth, but it is definitely not the gospel (the good news) of what Jesus did. I find most people intuitively that they are lost, and need to hear what they can do about it.

Travis.