

7 Principles of n.t.church - Part 2

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald discusses the principles of New Testament evangelism, emphasizing preaching, personal witness, and the importance of love and humility in outreach.

Duration: 40:55

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:3

Topics: "Church Practice"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a Christian life as a means of evangelism. He shares an anecdote about a friend who reacted negatively to his neighbors watering their lawn during a drought, causing him to miss an opportunity to share the gospel with them. The speaker encourages believers to show the love and kindness of God in their actions, which will attract others and open doors for sharing the gospel. He also mentions different forms of evangelism, such as Dan Porter's approach and the example of a sister in Yugoslavia, who found opportunities to witness by showing love and helping others.

Transcript

Could we turn tonight to 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, and I'd like to read verses 3 through 10. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 3 through 10. Paul is speaking about his coming to Thessalonica the first time and preaching the gospel there.

It says, For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile, but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness God is witness, nor of men thought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children.

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail, for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you. We preached unto you the gospel of God.

Ye are witnesses, and God also, how wholly and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. I'm thinking tonight with you about the subject of New Testament evangelism. This afternoon we were thinking about some principles of the New Testament church.

You remember the Apostle Paul said that he had a twofold ministry. The first was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the second was to make all men see what is the fellowship of ministry. The first had to do with the gospel, the second had to do with the assembly, with the church.

Well, I've got it backward. We talked about the church this afternoon. I'd like to think tonight about New Testament evangelism.

And I'm thinking particularly of three methods that I'd like to talk with you about. I'm sure there are many more. There's the method that's known as Scripture's preaching, but that's what Paul is thinking about primarily here in 1 Thessalonians.

Then there's a method that for want of a better name I'd like to call the cold turkey approach, and I'll explain what we mean by that. And it sounds ominous. And then the third method is what we might call personal witnessing through the context of our daily lives.

First of all, preaching. Of course, this was one of the great methods that was used in the New Testament times in the book of Acts. It's very, very prominent.

You have men like the Apostle Paul going forth, flaming fires for the Lord Jesus. Their pulpit was wherever the people would gather and listen, and they went forth heralding the glorious news of salvation. Really an awesome, a marvelous method to go forth and proclaim such a savior to the multitude.

Strangely enough, preaching has fallen on evil days among many in the younger generation today. It's really not a method that's very highly appreciated, and personal evangelism has largely taken its place. I would like to say to some of the young men to make themselves available to the Lord for this glorious ministry, if he should so call them.

The pendulum has swung away from it. I believe that one of these days this pendulum is going to swing back, and we'll see men of God burning and flaming lights, going forth for the Savior and preaching in this way. That's what Spurgeon said to his young men.

He said, Go forth, get on fire for God, and the world will turn out to see you burn. And he was thinking especially in connection with the public proclamation of the gospel. Think of some of the men down through the centuries, down through the history of the church, that God has used in this way.

Think of the Spirit of God, really in a sense the preaching of the Word of God is a conveying of the Spirit through the spoken message. Paul says as much in his letter to the Ephesians. So that's one of the methods of New Testament evangelism, and a method that certainly the blessing of God will always be upon.

Now there's another method that's very, very common among us today, and that's what I call the cold turkey approach. You know, we live in a very interesting day in our country, and there's an awful lot that we can really be thankful for. Isn't it interesting that today the word born again, or almost a household word, born again, and now everybody knows about it.

Time magazine reports it, speaks easily of these words and all the rest. An interesting country, you see, you drive along the freeway, you see the Ixos sticker on the cars. Now people in this country have a bold witness for the Lord Jesus.

Personally, I don't know of another country in the world where the Lord Jesus is made known so publicly as he is here. Filled with the gospel evangelism. There are souls all over who have been previously prepared by the Spirit of God.

I don't think there's any... The Spirit of God is working today, and he's working in my... One of the problems in connection with this method of evangelism, and this is often a tendency... Now this is something that we have... It's a tendency... It's a tendency to... ...of God in that person. Where anybody, when you speak to them about the Lord, and when this pressure comes to pray the prayer, as we say, and to make a profession of faith in Christ, there are people, there are multitudes of people all the time, there are people who say things, and they have... ...in this regard, and it didn't work. Well, they really never got through to the Lord Jesus.

Whatever else happened, whatever else profession there was, one thing in this, in regard to this method of evangelism, of the personal worker, doesn't seem... In other words, a person can be really as carnal and go out and carry on a program like this, how wholly and justly, real way, and there's no advertisement for any method of evangelism where this is not emphasized, and where we have the idea that we can live the routine and get results for God. Another type of thinking that we want to avoid in this connection, and it's not something we do for something we do, but praise God, God is sovereign in all of these things. Apart from the preaching back there in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, what was the New Testament really like? And as I envisage it, and this is what I'd like to share with you tonight, as I envisage it, it seems to me that it was a matter of Christians living in fellowship with God, and witnessing to the people in the context of their daily lives.

That means that here is a believer and he works down in the local carpentry shop. He's got his parish. He has his parish there.

Here's another one, and this one is just a homemaker in the community. She has her parish right there. She has her neighbors.

And here's another one, and he's going to school. And each one is expected to reach those whom he contacts day by day. Now, this is really marvelous when you start to think of it, because those people will reach folks that nobody else in the world can quite reach.

They can reach folks that Billy Graham would never reach. They'll never turn on their radios or anything of the sort, but they're watching you day by day as they live close to you. And they do watch us.

I had lunch recently with a friend, an unsaved friend whom I see infrequently, and he said to me, I see one of your people has reached the presidency at last. They know. They're watching us all the time and reading our lives, personal witness within the context of our daily lives.

But the important thing is this, the people get to know you and me, and they're watching you and me, and they're looking for a life that's different from theirs. And I have to stop and ask myself often, MacDonald, how is your life different from the lives of those people you're among in San Leandro, California? You see, our lives are supposed to be different. Our lives are supposed to be otherworldly.

And when people see us, they should be reminded of God. Really. And this is very sobering.

In this method of evangelism, the personal life is very, very important. And it's very, very easy to blow it. Let me give you an illustration.

I have a friend out there, and we're having a drought, as you probably know in California. Very serious. Very serious.

We would have welcomed the rain that fell here this afternoon. I have a young friend that I've been trying to disciple, and he just moved into a new neighborhood. And he went out one day, and he saw two of his neighbors watering their lawn.

Well, that's really verboten, you don't water your lawn. And what did he do? Well, I'm afraid he went and cut their ears off, really. I'm afraid he did.

And he was telling me about it afterwards, and he said, what, did I do something wrong? Well, I said, look, Frank, those people were candidates for a home Bible study. I think they are now. He just went after them.

You see, his life in that community, and he's new in the community, is so very important. New Testament evangelism. And so what it really boils down to is that I, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, must show the people around me the life of Christ so that their appetite is whetted, so that their thirst is stirred up.

Really, I think if it works right, I don't have to say too much to them. They'll come and open the door. They'll come and say something and give me the opportunity.

And what it means is that I, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, should always be looking for ways of showing love to these people. Brother Bramall was speaking to us this afternoon about love, and you know, the world today is dying for a little bit of love. It really is.

It breaks my heart, really. The only heaven a lot of people in our neighborhood is ever going to know, they're ever going to know, is right now. And they're looking for us to extend ourselves, to stand ourselves and be steadfast, and show them the Lord Jesus in all that we do and say.

We had a dear girl baptized at Bethany a couple of Sundays ago, a girl saved out of the Roman Catholic Church, the greatest mission field in the United States today, say it without hesitation. And she came and she took her stand for the Lord Jesus in the waters of baptism, and afterwards the Christian sisters came and they kissed her and they hugged her, and the Christian brothers. She said, she said, I've never had so much love.

A girl brought up in modern America, and there on the day of her baptism, that was the greatest display of love. And one of the, one of the Christians said to her, too bad your family couldn't be here today. And that goes back to what we were saying this afternoon about the body of Christ.

What a wonderful family. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. But the world is looking for love, and they're looking for us to act differently from themselves.

How can I do it? Well, I'm driving along the freeway. That morning I got down on my knees and said, Lord, open some opportunity to meet a witness for you today. I'm driving along the freeway, there's a fellow with a flat.

Well, I suppose I can push on, I've got a lot of things to do, 60 things going through my mind at the moment, but I can also stop and help him. And you know, I find it very, very easy to speak for the Lord Jesus after I've done something like that. I don't know about you.

I find the cold turkey approach to be cold turkey. Myself, I'm not condemning it, just myself. But if I can show the love of Christ to someone, I'll tell you, it makes it so easy to speak to them about the Lord, and so hard for them to turn your way.

I don't mean they all get saved, I don't mean that, but at least you've given them a demonstration of the Lord Jesus. And yet, really, you don't have to have divine light to do that either, do you? I'm sure there are a lot of worldly people who stop and help others with flats. I guess we have to go beyond that.

I suppose we could lend our neighbors our gardening tools and all the rest, the mower and all the rest. And that's good, and sometimes it really helps to make an opening for the gospel, but even then you don't have to have divine light to do that. There are an awful lot of nice neighbors in the world, aren't there? It saddens me to think of some of these people who are really such fine folks.

It's just a pleasure to know them, but they don't know the Savior. So we've really got to go beyond that. It means that we, for instance, have to show hospitality to those who can't repay us.

And incidentally, I would just like to recommend this as a marvelous way of New Testament evangelism, the open home and the open heart. Wonderful thing to get unsaved people at your table. Relaxed atmosphere.

No big deal. You don't ram the gospel down the throat, you do stop and give thanks, of course, before you eat. And maybe in the evening when you're through, you say, well, we always read the scriptures, you know.

Do you mind if we read the scriptures? It makes me think of my dear young friends out in Turkey, and that's what they were doing, you know. They would go out and meet these Turks, and no way these Turks could ever repay them, and they would invite them in after they had made contact with them, and sit around and have a nice meal with them. Of course, they hear the Bible story, and it really isn't hard to get the conversation on a spiritual level, is it? In fact, they open the door, and they start asking questions.

They start asking questions about the Christian faith, and you are off. It means that I, in the context of my daily life, have to show the long-suffering of Christ. Mr. Bramhall was mentioning this afternoon, love suffers long, and is kind.

This is what the world is looking for. It means that I'm going to repay every discourtesy that has been done to me. I'll tell you, we'll make an impact on our community when we start that kind of evangelism.

People will really start to talk. Your children are out praying, and the brats down the street get in a fight with them. They're your children, but they're brats.

And you know, it's quite a hassle, they already put on quite a Donnybrook there. And pretty soon, your neighbor lady, she comes to you, and with a few well-chosen words, she lays you out in lavender. What do you do? If we meet the world on their own terms, we've lost the testimony.

That's not Christianity, that's the way the world acts. And if I try to just answer back and argue and fight, no, no, that won't do at all. The best thing you can do is go into the kitchen and make a couple of apple pies and take one down to her and say, look, I'm really sorry, what do you think she'd say? I think she'd get double-toned, but that's Christ.

Brother Davies was mentioning about Yugoslavia, there was a dear sister down in Rijeka, Yugoslavia, some years ago, and she had a neighbor who was weird, really, she was really repulsive, and yet she longed for the opportunity to witness to this neighbor lady. And something very suspicious was happening at night, you know, they had stones marking the borders of their land, the boundaries of their land. And she went out one morning, and this neighbor lady had moved the boundary a foot closer to the Christian's house, she got a foot extra land just through the night.

And the Christian lost a foot of land. And believe you me, I was going to say it stirred up her Irish, but she was Yugoslav. But anyway, she went, the Christian went next door and gave it to her.

And then went back to her kitchen and said, well that, you know, the Lord really got a hold of her there, back in her own home, and he gently barbecued her, you know, imagine, imagine, you were Christian, here's a woman who isn't, and her pride was really paining her. But finally she did what she knew she had to do. She went next door, and she said to her, look, I'm sorry, she said, I'm a Christian, and I should never, never, never have come to you and talked like that.

She said, I'm sorry, she said, I apologize, and the woman broke down crying, she said, I don't want the land, I don't want it. The door was open for testimony. See, even when we blow it as a Christian, we still have that wonderful possibility of showing Christ through saying those words that are so hard to come by, I was wrong, I'm sorry, and incidentally, I believe that those words are one of the greatest keys to spiritual maturity.

And if you're not able to say those things, if you never have to say those things, I feel sorry for you. I was wrong. I'm sorry.

Please forgive me. That's God's way. This is God's way of victory.

It was a wonderful, a wonderful testimony for the Lord Jesus down there in Rheagan. What we need to do is be innovative. We need to be original and think up ways of showing the Lord Jesus by the gospel of the second mile.

When a person might slip on the left feet, turn the right author. They ask you to go in the mirror, go with restraint. Ask where your seat's up, give them your little proposal.

That's it. It'll make an impact for our blessed Lord in this evil, cold palace world in which we live. I have a young sister out there in the Fairhaven Assembly, and she didn't tell me this, but I heard the other day that she became burdened about an elderly lady in a retirement home out there.

I'm saying this for the benefit of the young sister. Sometimes we complain, what do you know? Well, you know what she did? Jan was burdened about this elderly lady out in the home there. First of all, she makes some Danish cookies.

And then she got a thermos jug, and she fills it with coffee. She makes some coffee and fills it. She got two old china cups and saucers, and some Teflon napkins and a table cloth, and some cream and some

sugar.

And she put it all in her little traveling bag, and she went out to the home, and she set a table, and she and this lady were talking together. A lady who was probably being consumed by loneliness. Do you know what I mean? Probably being consumed by loneliness.

And Jan went out there and showed the Lord Jesus to her. I'm telling you, that lady will never forget it, and neither will the other people in the home who heard about it. That's beautiful, isn't it? Beautiful.

I think this is evangelism in the New Testament context. I really do. I love the story of a university student.

And on this university, there was a fellow who was an alcoholic. And he was one of those alcoholics that when he got drunk, he was absolutely hopeless and quiet. Some people with a personality like a drill pickle, when they do drink, they become very depressed.

But he was one of those. And nobody liked him. He was really ostracized there at the university.

And finally, he was put out of his door. And there weren't any doors open to him either. And this Christian fellow heard about it, and he thought, I wonder should I invite him to come into my door.

I think I could think of 62 illogical reasons why not. But he couldn't think of any of them for a few days. So, he went to this alcoholic, and he said, I understand you'd like to accord with me today.

That's right. I'll just be a little quiet. Well, he said, I have room in my place.

And he said, if you'd like to come and live with me, you'd be welcome to do it, the Christian said. And so he did. The alcoholic was the only thing available to him.

So, he went in, and he tried to live with this Christian fellow. He'd come home at night to practice. And that Christian fellow would have to shave him, have to undress him.

There wasn't any of this practice that hadn't been stained with a fellow's bonnet. And that Christian really showed the Lord Jesus to a very, very costly fellow. And after the passing, the time had started eating away at this fellow.

It started getting to him. And one day, he said to the Christian, what are you doing all this for? What are you after? The Christian said, I'm after your soul. And he got it.

He wondered, he said, how to love love? Not love in the strictly sentimental way men think of it today. Love, divine love, agape love, the love of the Lord Jesus, let it rise in the human heart. You know, that's what brought us to the Lord Jesus, isn't it? His love.

He wants it to be radiating through us, through others. There was a young couple in the Sun Valley assembly out there, just a lovely young couple with several beautiful children. They were American heathens.

They were living out there in Clayton, and just American heathens. They knew nothing about Christianity. But they had some Christian neighbors, and their name was Clifford.

And when this unsaved lady had to go to the hospital to monitor her baby, the Cliffords went over with all the meals for the family. No big deal. They didn't say anything.

They just went over with the meals. And Jay and Barbara's husband. And Jay and Barbara, when they got together, they talked about it.

They'd never done anything like that before. They'd never seen people act like that before. And they got close to the Cliffords.

The Cliffords were able to point them to the Lord Jesus. God's grace is a beautiful thing, but I sometimes think it like that. Beautiful vessels to shine in.

God, those two beautiful vessels, that day, really did. And Jay and Barbara came to the Lord Jesus. And I tell you, they've been through fierce trials and afflictions since.

Jay's a pastor, and one day he was out there. And a steel hygiene came down on both his arms. Came down on both his arms.

He was shattered. And he went to the hospital. And they don't have anything in the way of money.

But they have trust in the living God. I went to visit Jay one time, and he was telling me this. And it really touched my heart.

Young believers, oh boy, don't allow that to get into the life of young believers. You're making your faith person sick. They'll never be able to take it.

Listen, Barbara called him one day when he was in the hospital and said, Jay, you know, you don't have money to pay the rent. Well, he was so taken up with his own troubles at that moment, he kind of just turned it off. Didn't bother him at all.

But a few days later, he said, hey, you don't have money to pay the rent. So he called Barbara, and he said, Barbara, what shall I do? He said, shall I call some friends? And, you know, he said, Jay, the Lord knows what we need. Let's leave it with the Lord.

He'll take care of it. And do you know that night, Jay's father came and gave him three times the amount of money he needed, not risking the hospital. Young couples, how would they be sure? First, their cooks went over and took their meals to the family when the mother was in the hospital.

Hospitality and kindness is like that. What a wonderful thing, when some of our neighbors go to the hospital, when that man has to go to the hospital for surgery, just to go down and sit with the wife there while she's waiting, during those terrible hours of tension, while her husband's in the operating room, just to be there with her and sit there and talk to her and seek to be of comfort to her. I think this is a new section of evangelism, don't you? I would tell you something to talk to your husband.

There's a cost involved. But anything that doesn't cost isn't worth very much, anyway. And this means that we're pouring out our lives in the service of Christ, for these people for whom Christ died.

I often think of this in connection with Naomi and Luke. They've already been alluded to. In fact, it's rather interesting to me how the Lord has opened the keys in the conference so far.

Naomi and Luke have more to say. Down there, all her idols, all she's ever known, shrines and all the rest, I'll let you imagine what her bedroom looks like. And now Naomi's going to go back to Bethlehem, Judah, the house of bread and the house of praise.

And she gets the two daughters-in-law and says, Lord, you can stay here. You've got to stay here, you know, Moab, your home. Isn't that what we want to stay? And Luke says, no, I want to stay with you.

Now, I ask myself the question, why? Why? Did Naomi give Luke, of course, an evangelism? Let me tell you something. What was it that made Luke want to go back to Bethlehem? He saw something of Jehovah in the life of Naomi, and he said, that's what I want. He went back to her.

Dear friends, you and I have a constituency. God has placed you where you are, and that's your destiny. Don't call that creature from hush-hush Wisconsin to come and do the work.

When you get a fish on the line, you're the one. You show the love of God, and you show the kindness of God, and you startle these people by the Christian life that you live before them. And they'll come to you and ask you what it's all about.

It'll be easy to go through the door when they open the door. Mind you, this method takes longer, too, doesn't it? This method can last, folks, a long, long time. But I'll tell you, those people will never, never forget.

And so by many waters, so besides many waters, and God will attend your testimony with gladness. There are many different kinds of evangelism, but I just wanted to commend this one to you. In a special way tonight, the evangelism of Jan Porter, who is a firm throttle full of offers.

The evangelism of that student in the university willing to take in the alcoholics and show him the love of the Lord Jesus. And it's you, the innovator. You think of what God will give you to listen to, think of ways that you can reach that neighbor who's been on your heart.

What a joy it will be. What a joy it will be. It's a great support to have them say, thank you very much, it was you who invited me here.

When in the mansions above the stage, all around me appear, I want to hear somebody say, it was you who invited me here. May the Lord bless us in our evangelistic efforts and speak truth for his eternal glory. Hallelujah!

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