

Evangelism Through Interactive Bible Study

By Michael Delaney – Gospel Missionary & Reformer In Christ

It is written, “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4. Jesus spoke these words to the devil when tempted to turn stones into bread after forty days of fasting in the wilderness. He was quoting Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3) that had been studied and internalized during his life leading up to his public ministry. Throughout His life, even up to His death on the cross, the Holy Scriptures were referred to and used mightily even when He suffered the supreme suffering of separation from the presence of His Father when He Who “knew no sin, became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Psalm 22 and 2 Cor. 5:21.

The Apostle Paul likewise was an ardent student of Scripture, a Pharisee who had memorized and at the age of thirteen could quote the first five books of the Torah (Old Testament). If you consider the scope of influence regarding Christian thought and teaching it can be readily seen that Paul represents perhaps the greatest Evangelist who ever lived. Almost half of the New Testament originated from his willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide him in his evangelistic efforts, which included not only teaching but writing as well.

Both Jesus and Paul were students of Scripture. Jesus is referred to as the “author and finisher of our faith,” Hebrews 12:2. Paul was not only an apostle of Jesus but in truth was a follower of the Master. In all things he sought to emulate and represent the beautiful character of the One Who had so suddenly stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus. It was there that the risen Jesus confronted him and powerfully revealed to him the destiny he would now pursue. The risen Christ also confronted two disheartened disciples on the road to Emmaus who were downcast and discouraged in their failure to understand the reality of what had taken place at Calvary. Their hopes of the coming kingdom and the blessed reign of their beloved Messiah seemed dashed to pieces before their eyes. As they walked a “Stranger” joined them and began to witness to them. Here is the account from Scripture:

Luke 24: 13-35, NKJV (emphasis supplied)

The Road to Emmaus

*Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, **while they***

*conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning **at Moses and all the Prophets**, He expounded to them **in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself**.*

The Disciples' Eyes Opened

Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.

Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "**Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?**" So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Note carefully in this account how Jesus immediately began to reveal to these men **the truth about Himself as it was written in the Holy Scriptures**. See also how these men repeated this truth after Jesus miraculously vanished from their sight. The truth regarding Jesus, Who is the way, the truth and the life, was **readily and powerfully seen in the Scriptures**.

In my thirty plus years of personal ministry evangelistic efforts which have involved a number of methodologies ranging from personal witnessing to individuals to large and lengthy organized campaigns, the most powerful results in terms of spontaneous response and heartfelt enduring conviction have come from within prison walls. Incarcerated men and women comprise a very mixed bag of culture, ethnicity, and background belief systems. When you confront them, many have been studying the Scriptures without correct understanding for months and even years. Many have never opened a Bible but attend the Christian missionary meetings out of curiosity. Some come to openly challenge and refute. Some come with seeking hearts and minds looking for something to give them a ray of hope in the midst of the dark circumstances they are constrained to face. The same can be said of a public evangelistic crusade if you think about it. The prison cells of sinful circumstances exist, yet without physical bars or chains in the lives of multitudes. These "prisoners" attend the meetings with the same hopes, fears, doubts and anticipation for something to relieve the mental and often physical pain that confronts them daily. It is in these settings that the power of evangelism through Biblical revelation and study can most effectively be seen.

In one particular setting at a maximum-security correctional facility in South Central Florida, I had the great privilege of conducting a weekly Bible Study with up to twenty-five inmates at a time. Often I would speak to much larger assemblies when invited by the Chaplains who worked there full time. It was however in the Bible study sessions that the power of evangelism really was apparent in a marked way.

Using a set of Bible studies authored by Jack Sequeira called the "*God So Loved The World*" Bible course, an atmosphere of profound interactive communication, regulated and blessed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, took place each time we met. This set of Bible studies is patterned after the methodology of the great Evangelist/Apostle Paul

who, in the book of Romans takes most of the first three chapters describing the wretchedness and sinful condition of all men. He makes no difference regarding Jews or Gentiles regarding their lost condition, in their *nature* as well as in their *performance*, without the grace of God in their lives. It is not until Chapter 3 and verse 21 that Paul powerfully announces the good news and then goes on to explain in great detail the truth of Christ our righteousness in the remainder of the Epistle. Justification and righteousness by faith is clearly set forth as the precious truth that “sets all men free.”

After “breaking the ice” with the first set of “students” in this series of studies, we spent the next 2 months discussing the reality of the gospel as unconditional good news to all for deliverance from sin in all its aspects. The men were totally involved and as we went from Scripture to Scripture answering the questions posed in the studies, all questions and concerns were addressed and respectfully resolved. These studies laid the foundation of Jesus being the substrative and essential essence of every aspect of deliverance from sin and its effects. These men literally responded in love towards Jesus their only hope and Savior! All this happened as a result of seriously studying the revelation of Jesus in the Scriptures. These classroom studies were not merely a classroom setting where the “teacher” lectured for an hour while they took notes. These blessed sessions were interactive, with all participating in some way. Even those who were timid and shy at the outset were, before long, questioning and commenting freely and with joy! After the first lesson (Lesson number 6) regarding the question “what must I DO to be saved” dealing with the subjective response of the believer to the gospel good news, the most amazing response took place. Before the end of the study, six men stood up and approached me and emphatically declared to my face, **baptize me!** No appeal at all was given! No invitation extended to join anything! No response cards were handed out at the beginning of the study for them to fill out. No psychological manipulation was exercised using the common fear of punishment or hope of reward motivation. These convicted men deeply wanted to identify with the Jesus they had so come to know and love in the joyful study of Scripture! During the remainder of this course 8 more inmates responded in like manner and I had the great privilege of baptizing them to the great glory of God.

As we approach the tumultuous events soon to take place just before Jesus returns, let us use what God has given us in the great gift of His Holy Scriptures. Evangelism is sharing GOOD NEWS! The good news of our salvation through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, needs to be communicated to the starving masses that have been and are being misled by the enemy of God and all faithful souls. Take what God has given you and according to the blessings of truth He has imparted unto you, take your Bibles and share with others **the gospel of the wonderful Savior that has so blessed and delivered you** from the condemnation, power and presence of sin through the truth as it is in Him!

Be wise as serpents but harmless as doves. Regarding true evangelism, hearts are reached when needs are met. If you are able to physically bless people who are in genuine need either by benevolent giving or health instruction and physical care then by all means use these “entering wedges” to make the contact, and soften the hearts. Then provide the Scriptural truth of salvation in Jesus to any and all who will receive it. If you read the collective Gospels in Scripture you will find Jesus the healer and personal evangelist far more than the public orator addressing huge crowds. He delighted in

personal, face to face communication with individuals and small groups where He healed, prayed for, wept with and manifested Himself as the golden and crimson thread binding the blessed truth of Himself **in Scripture** as the Deliverer and Savior of all men. He revealed the true character of our and His Father in Heaven as the God of *Agape*, loving us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to this world that whosoever believes in Him and receives Him as Savior can experience full salvation. Let us never forget that the Loving Father did not send Jesus to the world to condemn the world but that through Him the world might be saved! Let us allow the following formula in a paraphrased expression of Galatians 2:20 to become real in our personal experience that we might actively participate in the true evangelism ordained and so graciously given to us by such a wondrous and loving God.

Galatians 2:20 Paraphrased
By Michael Delaney

“I have been crucified with Christ when I was IN HIM two thousand years ago, (2 Corinthians 5:14), yet I remain alive! Yet it is not the fallen, carnal man that I once was that lives BUT NOW it is Christ living in me! And the perfect life I lived IN HIM when He carried me within Himself two thousand years ago is now being manifested in my personal experience! Yea, it is even by the VERY FAITH OF JESUS HIMSELF, that He graciously imparts to me that I am overcoming this fallen, sinful flesh that still encumbers me, even as, through perfect faith, He overcame that self-same fallen sinful nature when He assumed it because of His unspeakable love for me and made the ultimate and eternal sacrifice of Himself in order to save me.”

*In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus spoke the following to his gathered
disciples:*

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Let us go then with joy and fulfill His request!

The Bible Course mentioned in this article (The original *God So Loved The World* in HTML format) can be found at the following website:

www.jacksequeira.org