

Acts 3:11-4:4

Weak Witnesses Become Strong Evangelists

9/1/24

Main Point: Boldness in evangelism starts with a bold evangelist, which starts with a completely transformed character, which starts with experiencing the supernatural power of the risen Christ. Here we have a model for Biblical evangelism that is pleasing to God and effective to reach people's hearts. It must be driven/motivated by these 3 aspects – weakness, compassion, and confidence.

SI: Solomon's Portico – a colonnade – a series of columns with a roof – built along a wall that was likely built by Solomon – the whole temple complex was destroyed in 586 BC – this is Herod's Temple which took 46 years to build the whole complex, including 15 foot thick walls around it.

We pick up after this lame beggar has been healed – he was well known for sitting at the gate and asking for alms – now he's leaping and praising God.

Read.

Intro: Peter the Evangelist.

Look at what he has – and I'm making the case for – what every evangelistic outreach must have in order to be thoroughly Biblical and effective – weakness, compassion, and confidence. Peter, and John supporting him, lean hard into these – weakness, compassion, and confidence.

1 Weakness Drives Supernatural Boldness - vs. 11-12 - Transformative grace.

v. 12 is a mix of boldness, honesty, and zeal – all 3 – it's not about me! This healing, this life transformation that God brings is not about my church, my kingdom, my pride, my credit, my teaching, my platform. It's about what only God can do.

Peter and John have been transformed by the risen Christ – remember who they were when they walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry...

Peter and John were, as Luke refers to them later, uneducated, common men. They were fishermen.

Peter was rash, overly emotional, reactionary, great at sticking his foot in his mouth.

Jesus gives John and his brother James the nicknames "Sons of Thunder" – what does this mean? A thunderous temper? Probably so. In Luke 9, a group of Samaritans didn't welcome Jesus into their village, so James and John asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ([Luke 9:54](#)).

So John had a natural boldness, but not a boldness derived from weakness!

Peter and John – we are not going to be a holy huddle! We are not going to be ingrown and safe and insulated. We are going to live out, go out, leave the 99, be salt and light. Not part of the in-crowd, not part of the power brokers, not part of the religious leadership.

*Your weakness is a great, great asset, to be protected. (As Clint mentioned last week – when the Church gets into positions of political power things go bad.)

Isn't this counter-intuitive? And rarely heard in evangelism training? But doesn't this light up your soul?

God uses the weak things of the world to shame the strong. Why? To keep us feeling our weakness so that our boldness comes from the Spirit, not from our flesh.

*1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Luke is bringing us in here to see their boldness – what we're seeing is holy, supernatural boldness increases over time – time spent with Jesus – they got this boldness through spending time with Jesus – 3 years + 40 days after Resurrection + watching His Ascension and hearing from angels. And spending time with Jesus' people and then going out to where people are

Try to share the good news of what Jesus has done and accomplished and step in to your weakness...

And one of these is to give you opportunity to be influential in your world, and not overly focus on being attractational. Yes, the church has lots of needs. But we don't want you to be overly busy with church activity, we want to give you space to be involved in all kinds of activities, clubs, groups outside the church so that you can bring salt and light to your world.

Weakness drives supernatural boldness

2 Compassion Drives Courageous Honesty – vs. 13-15 – willing to say hard things – honesty with others about the ugly – they need to hear it. Why? Without the ugly there is no need for cleansing, healing, forgiving.

Doctors are good at what they do b/c they don't just find the bleeding, they find the cause of it. They don't just cure the pain, they find the cause of the pain. They ask uncomfortable questions – have you done this, done that? They say hard things to us - If you change your lifestyle, you'll very likely turn this condition around...

This is what Peter does- he knows his audience – fellow everyday Jews – not the leaders. You did this but you acted in ignorance!

This is so many people's stories! Their consciences have been hardened or they have been deceived by evil or both.

What is he saying? Shame on you? No! You did this. Honesty. There is mercy available, there is forgiveness for the penitent, there is cleansing and restoration through Christ, whom the prophets foretold would be the Final Sacrifice.

See, he is leading with compassion! His compassion drives his courageous honesty.

Don't make it an '-ism', a formula, a program, a technique, a strategy. Just share what He did. And your own need for Him. People know when you are giving them a spiel, a package, a pitch that is often more about you than about truly loving them.

No need to needlessly offend people – this is where evangelism gets a bad name and gives Christians a bad taste, and I have a pretty good idea that some of you stay away from even the word evangelism b/c you don't want to be identified with that style.

Some of us are so eager for people to come to Christ that we cross all the lines of social/relational intuition and take 30 steps forward before the person is ready for one step forward!

Evangelism has always been hard.

Why?

B/c Evangelism is Love. Loving others is very hard to do. Putting others before yourself, not using people for your own gain, very hard.

Evangelism is Love. What is loving to do, say, act? How can I say this in as inoffensive a way as possible, even though the gospel must be offensive or it's not the gospel. It offends my pride, my reputation, my self-image, for you to tell me that I have sinned. Only the Holy Spirit working can give me grace to admit the ugliness about myself. Otherwise it's just too painful and leads me to despair.

As Christianity loses its influence on the larger culture, as secularism takes hold, how do we share Christ with people?

Story from BMB of suspicious of me bc I am a pastor – his experience colored his view of all Christians – are they all like this? The spiel is more important than the person you are presenting to.

It gave me more and more confidence in the 6 question model of evangelism that I use and many of you have learned, too. Knowing our audience – people need Christians to take it slow.

Story from TGC of Heidi Jenkins – the Spirit slowly working on her conscience to show her not only her guilt, but the freedom from guilt that only Jesus brings - after her 2nd abortion

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/my-body-choice-jesus/>

A good indication that the Holy Spirit is working in someone is a recognition of their own guilt, the mess that they have made, the part that they have played. Without this, there cannot be repentance.

So they were weak and that drove their supernatural boldness, they were compassionate enough to be courageously honest, and last, and throughout, most importantly -3

3 Confidence in God's Word Drives Zealous Appeal

17-26 is all appeal,

Appeal from – the OT prophets – Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT promises!

Appeal to – brother Jews – he knew his audience

Peter and John - Zeal in sharing the path of salvation, of rescue, to see God bless people by turning them away from their wickedness

I was thinking, this is why I got into ministry! The taste of seeing what God can do to transform people's lives. This is something of why you all are here – transcendence, power, longing for life, joy, justice.

This is what political parties try to mimic – you know, “hope and change,” “make America great again,” “joy” – here's what government power can give you and it is quite appealing.

So how is Peter's appeal different?

(Zeal: eagerness, ardent interest in pursuing something; great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause)

4:2 > Life in Jesus – ‘proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead’

Zeal to convince you that what you are seeing is real and happened b/c of Jesus

The power of the power of Jesus. This is why we keep Him and His Word central.

Evangelism is simple as you keep Jesus central.

b/c of what faith in Jesus brings: forgiveness, healing, future (v.19-20)

I really do believe in this, and here's why. A transformed life is evidence, proof, beauty.

The formerly lame beggar is now “leaping and praising God”

Repentance is a blessing – v. 19 and 26 - a gift, a promised gift from Gen 12

The Gospel contains warning – save yourselves from this crooked generation.

Warning is loving

To say nothing is the opposite of love - anger, self-righteousness, no compassion – they are getting what they have earned, what they deserve and I'm happy about it.

Which is why these other two must come first and be constantly renewed – weakness and compassion -

ILLUS of the first exercise in my residency with Evangelize Today – go somewhere and notice tattoos and see what arises out of your heart - is there a judgmental spirit? – I'm over 50 – I remember when tattoos were way less prevalent

Peter models here just plain explanation of what has happened before their eyes.

People wonder. People are astounded at lives truly transformed.

Tell the how and why. This is who I was. This is the ugly. This is what happened to me, and it's all because of Jesus and His Resurrection power.

Oct 4th Evangelism Workshop with Stephen Merwin – a training opportunity – we know evangelism is hard and we want to give you some opportunity to exercise your muscles of weakness, compassion, and confidence in God's Word.

Conc: What if you're sitting there thinking, I don't have any of these, and I have no desire to share Christ like this. Well, if you are in Christ, you do have these. Maybe you are not in Christ yourself – examine yourself. Is repentance refreshing to you? Is repentance a gift to be enjoyed b/c it brings healing to you? Or is it to be avoided b/c you have no need? Are you blinded to your own dependence upon yourself? Turn to Jesus – He is able to heal, restore, and bring life where there is now death, and He proved it by His Resurrection from the dead.

Bene: Rev 1