

Winning the Hard Ones

Gospel Tracks

Mike Brinkmeier

“When we share our faith, it is a win/win situation. If people accept what we say, we win. If we plant the seed of God’s Word, we win; and even if we are rejected, we win. The Bible says that when that happens, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us (see 1 Peter 4:14). When we contend for the faith and are rejected, we are to rejoice and leap for joy, for great is our reward in heaven (see Luke 6:22, 23). It is a winning situation every single time that we share our faith!”

MARK CAHILL

“I hope I’m going to heaven when I die.”

Of all the things that you should be sure of, it’s your eternal destiny. To say “I hope I’m going to heaven” is like standing at the open door of a plane 25,000 feet in the air and, when asked “If you have your parachute on, answering with “I hope so.” You want to know so—and you can, simply by obeying the gospel. If you repent and place your faith in Jesus Christ, He will give you eternal life and you can know that your eternity is secure. In 1 John 5:12, 13, the Bible also makes clear that those who refuse to trust in the Son of God can likewise know that they do not have eternal life—they will remain dead in their sins.

In writing to the Corinthian believers, Paul explains the lengths to which he would go to share the gospel: “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

If Paul meant “by all means,” he no doubt would have used gospel tracts as one means to reach the lost.

Never underestimate the power of a gospel tract. After George Whitefield read one called “The Life of God in the Soul of a Man,” he said, “God showed me I must be born again or be damned.”

He went on to pray, “Lord, if I am not a Christian, or if I am not a real one, for Jesus Christ’s sake show me what Christianity is, that I may not be damned at last!” Then his journal tells us “from that moment...did I know that I must become a new creature.”

A Christian book relates the true story of a diver who saw a piece of paper clutched in the shell of an oyster. The man grabbed it, found that it was a gospel tract and said, “I can’t hold out any longer. His mercy is so great that He has caused His Word to follow me even to the bottom of the ocean.”

God used a tract to save the man. He also used a tract to save the great missionary Hudson Taylor, as well as innumerable others.

Why should Christians use tracts? Simply because *God* uses them. That fact alone should be enough incentive for a Christian to always use tracts to reach the lost, but there are even more reasons why we should use them. Here are a few:

- Tracts can provide an opening for us to share our faith. We can watch people's reaction as we give them a tract, and see if they are open to listening to spiritual things.

- They can do the witnessing for us. If we are too timid to speak to others about the things of God, we can at least give them a tract, or leave one lying around so that someone will pick it up.
- They speak to the individuals when they are ready; people don't read it until they want to.
- They can find their way into people's homes when we can't.
- They don't get into arguments; they just state their case.

Oswald J. Smith said, “The only way to carry out the Great Commission will be by the means of the printed page.”

Charles Spurgeon stated, “When preaching and private talk are not available, you need to have a tract ready...Get good striking tracts, or none at all. But a touching gospel tract may be the seed of eternal life. Therefore, do not go out without your tracts.”

If you want people to accept your literature, try to greet them before offering them a tract. If you can get them to respond to a warm “Good morning,” or “How are you doing?” that will almost always break the ice and they will take it. After the greeting, don’t ask, “Would you like this?” They will probably respond, “What is it?”

Instead, say, “Did you get one of these?” That question has a twofold effect. You stir their curiosity and make them ask, “One of what?” That’s when you hand them a tract. It also makes them feel as though they are missing out on something. So they are.

Perhaps you almost pass out at the thought of passing out a tract. Don't worry; you are not alone. We *all* battle fear.

The answer to fear is found in the prayer closet. Ask God to give you a compassion that will swallow your fears. Meditate on the fate of the ungodly. Give hell some deep thought. Confront what it is that makes you fearful.

Do you like roller coasters? Some Christians want to try skydiving or bungee-jumping. Isn't it strange? We are prepared to risk our lives for the love of fear—and yet we are willing to let a sinner go to hell for fear of giving out a tract.

Ask yourself how many piles of bloodied stones you can find where Christians have been stoned to death for preaching the gospel. How much singed soil can you find where they have been burned at the stake? Part of our fear is a fear of rejection. We are fearful of looking foolish. That's a subtle form of pride. The other part of our battle with fear comes directly from the enemy. He knows that fear paralyzes. We must resist the devil and his lies. If God is with us, nothing can be against us.

I find it hard to understand why *every* Christian doesn't carry gospel tracts.

Joey Hancock of the American Tract Society said, "Fifty-three percent of all who come to Christ worldwide come through the use of printed gospel literature." If we really care about the eternal salvation of those around us, how could we not carry tracts everywhere we go?

Look at these words from Charles Spurgeon on the use of tracts: I well remember distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something...[Tracts are] adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. They may not have the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers...They may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ; but were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second, but that first attained, we are encouraged to take another, and so at the last...There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell.

If you have never given out tracts, why not begin today? If you are fearful when it comes to witnessing, here's something you can do that doesn't take much courage. Go into a phone booth. Open the phone book to the Yellow Pages; find "Abortion" and slip a tract between the pages. Then look for the category "Escorts" and slip a tract in there. Many phone booths have a door, so you can close the door behind you and do this without fear of being seen. You are not breaking the law, and simply leaving a gospel tract in those two places may not only keep someone from making a terrible life-changing decision, but it may bring them to faith in the Savior.

Then each night as you shut your eyes to go to sleep, you will have something very special to pray about—that God will use the tracts you put somewhere. You will also have a deep sense of satisfaction that you played a small part in carrying out the Great Commission to reach this dying world with the gospel of everlasting life.

Don't waste your life. Do something for the kingdom of God while you are able to. Always remember: treat every day as though it were your last—one day you will be right.

A Point to Ponder:

Although the prophet Jeremiah was assured that God formed him, knew him, sanctified and ordained him, he still was paralyzed by the fear of man (Jeremiah 1:5, 6). When fear of man seeks to paralyze us, we must stop saying, “I cannot speak,” and instead say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

This verse obliterates our every excuse for not preaching the gospel to every creature. It counters the fear of man, the fear of rejection, the fear of public speaking, and the fear of offering a stranger a gospel tract.

Some Common Mistakes in Evangelism:

1. Personal testimony.

Talking about what God has done in your life may encourage Christians and intrigue non-Christians, but it isn't necessarily evangelism.

Evangelism is telling what Jesus Christ has done to save *every* sinner who will *ever* turn from his sin and trust in Jesus.

2. Social action.

When we care for the poor, defend the defenseless, and work for a more just society we may commend the gospel, but we haven't yet shared it.

Evangelism is telling others the gospel. Contrary to the opinion of some, that can't be done without words!

3. Apologetics.

Defending the faith against unbelievers' objections can lead to evangelism, but apologetics is not evangelism.

Apologetics can be a useful tool, but if we're not careful it can actually distract us from evangelism, which is telling the good news about Jesus Christ.

4. The results of evangelism.

We can share the gospel. *We cannot* make anyone believe it. Thinking that we haven't evangelized unless people have been converted is a serious error that can cripple Christians with a sense of failure and guilt.

But if we recognize that our job is merely to tell others the good news about Christ, we are liberated to simply preach the gospel and pray for God to change hearts.

So what is the Gospel?

1 Cor. 15:1-4 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Closing Thoughts

Consider the way dogs cross the road. A dog will wander onto a freeway oblivious to the danger. His tail wags as he steps between cars without a second thought. Cars swerve. Tires squeal. The noise is deafening as vehicles smash into each other. The sleepy dog stops wagging his tail for a moment and looks at the pile of smoldering, broken cars on the freeway. His expression betrays his thoughts. His bone-burying brain doesn't realize for one moment that he is responsible for the disaster.

When man wanders onto the freeway of sin, his tail wags with delight. He thinks that this is what he was made for. His thoughts of any repercussions for his actions are shallow. His mind wanders into lust, then predictably he wanders onto the path of adultery. Suddenly a disaster sits before him. His marriage is shattered, his name is slurred, and his children are twisted and scarred. But like the dumb dog, he doesn't realize for one moment that he is solely responsible for his sin. This is why the perfect Law of God needs to be arrayed before his darkened eyes—to show him that his way is not right in the eyes of a perfect God.