

TOOLS FOR TEACHING

Volume 3: Why Won't They Listen?

Outline

Generations ago, it was enough (from a human perspective) for evangelists to preach “repent of your sins!” Sadly, this is not so today. Our culture has gradually shifted from being knowledgeable of the Bible as the Jews, to being as the Greek philosophers during Paul’s day. Is it possible to effectively evangelize our culture today?

1. What is the gospel?

- a. Foundational knowledge: Jesus Christ, the Creator, created a “very good” world (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16). Adam’s disobedience brought sin into the world, and death through sin, and so death passed to all men.
- b. Power: Christ the Creator, the Son of God, became a man (the Last Adam), to suffer the curse of death and shed His blood on our behalf.
- c. Hope: There is a new heavens and Earth to come, where there will be no more tears, pain or death (Revelation 21:4), much like the original creation but with no possibility of sin.

2. A Tale of Two Sermons (1 Corinthians 1:23)

- a. Peter preached to the Jews, for whom the Cross was a “stumbling block” (Acts 2:22–24).
 - Thousands responded to the message.
 - The main message was the preaching of the Cross.
 - Peter was preaching to a creation-based culture, the Jews and Gentiles who were proselytes to Judaism.
 - Thus they had the knowledge of the Creator God, sin and the need for atonement for sin, as well as prophecies of the coming Messiah.
 - Peter preached the “power” of the gospel, because the “foundational knowledge” was already in place.
- b. Paul preached to the Greek philosophers, for whom the cross was “foolishness” (Acts 17:18 and following).
 - The Epicureans and Stoics were basically part of an evolution-based culture.
 - They lacked knowledge of God, sin or the need for atonement for sin.
 - Paul began with the “foundation” of the gospel message, explaining the “unknown God,” defining the Creator God in detail (verse 24). He then preached the “power” of the resurrection.
 - Some were interested and some believed (verse 34).

3. Modern-day examples of preaching to a “Greek” culture

- a. Japan has no Christian foundation.
- b. New Tribes Mission have found that missionaries need to begin with Genesis, providing the “foundational knowledge” necessary to preach the gospel message. Otherwise, tribes often just add Jesus to their list of other gods.

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4. Three tips for effective evangelism

- a. Recognize our culture is becoming increasingly like the Greek philosophers. There is very little “prepared ground” in today’s society (Jeremiah 4:3). Creation evangelism (“pre-evangelism”) helps to prepare hearts by knocking out the wrong foundation (a belief in evolution/“millions of years”) and providing the right foundation based on God’s Word, teaching the true history from Genesis.
- b. Recognize that many in the *church* are like the Greek philosophers, lacking a foundational knowledge of Christianity. Christians need to be taught to
 - uphold their faith and biblical authority by learning to answer the questions asked by the world (1 Peter 3:15).
 - reconnect the Bible to the real world by relating what it teaches about death, suffering, rocks, dinosaurs, etc.
 - view the world through biblical glasses (i.e. the 7 C’s of History: Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ, Cross, Consummation).
- c. Understand the group you are evangelizing and deal with the inconsistencies in non-Christian thought patterns.

Conclusion: Our culture was once like the Jews, with a basic understanding of sin and death and a knowledge of God. Preachers basically needed to concentrate on the message of the Cross (i.e. the power of the gospel) in their preaching. Because the Christian foundation is slowly being eroded by a belief in “millions of years,” and because the church has compromised with this false belief, our culture is becoming more like the “Greeks”—lacking a knowledge of the Creator God and an understanding of sin and death. In our evangelism, we need to be aware of which culture we are preaching to, and need to restore the proper “foundational knowledge” of the gospel for those who lack it, enabling them to understand their need for a Savior.

Dr Kevin Mannoia, President of the National Association of Evangelicals, *Kansas Christian*, March 5, 1999, page 16.

The environment in which we now exist is one in which there is no knowledge of the Bible and its stories which were learned at Grandmother’s knee. We must learn how to communicate to a society that has no Christian background at all.

Recommended resources:

Why Won't They Listen? by Ken Ham

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discussion

1. Why is the preaching of the cross considered a “stumbling block” to the Jews?

Answer: The Jews were a creation-based culture, believing in the true God, understanding sin (having the Commandments) but by and large not accepting the message that Jesus Christ was the Messiah—this was their stumbling block.

2. Why is the preaching of the Cross considered “foolishness” to the Greeks?

Answer: The Greek culture was “evolution-based” (their philosophers taught an early concept of evolution; they had no idea of the God of creation, as the Jews understood). They had no understanding of the meaning of sin or why death was in the world. They did not have the foundational knowledge to understand the gospel. They thus responded by claiming that Paul’s message was foolish.

3. In what ways is our culture like the Greek philosophers? Like the Jews?

Answer: Generations of young people are being taken through an education system that is by and large devoid of the knowledge of God. They are being taught that the universe can and should be explained only by natural causes—nothing supernatural was involved. These people are being directed onto a road similar to the one the Greeks were on. This road detours them away from an understanding of the Cross because it does not have the right beginning/history leading to the message of the Cross. Most of today’s students are really “Greeks” in their thinking, and thus respond to the message of the Cross as “foolishness.”

There are still those in our society who have been raised with foundational knowledge of Christianity but have not yet received the free gift of eternal life.

4. What is “pre-evangelism”? Why is it necessary in today’s culture?

Answer: To be successful in reaching today’s generations with the gospel, like Paul in reaching the Greeks, these people need to be shown the way back to the true beginning of history (Creation, Adam and Eve, Fall, etc.) to get them onto the right road, so they will understand the message of the Cross. At the same time, the evolutionary, humanistic propaganda these people have been taught needs to be counteracted.

5. What is the problem with teaching only “Bible stories” in today’s Bible school classes?

Answer: It doesn’t reconnect the Bible with the real world, and doesn’t teach the children how to defend and uphold their faith.

6. Why is it important to reconnect the Bible to the real world?

Answer: So that we recognize it as authoritative in all matters it touches on.

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7. List and define the “7 C’s of History.”

Answers:

- Creation—God created the universe in six actual days and declared it “very good.”
- Corruption—Adam’s disobedience brought death, sickness and sorrow to the world, thus leading to the need for a Redeemer.
- Catastrophe—God judged the wickedness of man with the global Flood of Noah’s day.
- Confusion—God confused the language of Noah’s descendants, causing them to spread out into various tribes and nations all over the earth.
- Christ—The Creator God stepped into history to become a man and came to redeem the world from sin.
- Cross—Christ died on the Cross, and paid the death penalty for those who receive Him.
- Consummation—The Curse will one day be removed and God will prepare a new heavens and Earth for His children.

discussion