

The following series of devotions written by Dr Daniel Shayesteh – a founder member of the Iranian Hezbollah before he converted to Christianity – focuses on the topic of INFLUENTIAL EVANGELISM.

WEEK 1: Christian Evangelism Is Influential by Nature

Christian evangelism is influential, because God has the major role in it. He has the full leadership in the process of saving, equipping, sending and redeeming. Evangelism indeed is the announcement of the Good News that God has made Himself fully available to save people no matter of their background. In all other religions, gods have left the task of salvation to humanity, but in the Bible, God Himself has taken personal initiatives to save people personally. A simple comparison proves that the salvation by God in the Bible is more reliable and honourable than the salvation delegated to humanity in other religions, since God is mightier than Satan and can free people from his hands.

That's why we call the salvation in the Gospel the Good News compared to all those beliefs that have left the chained humanity alone to unchain themselves from the hands of Satan. Who can save people from the bondage of Satan other than God?

Almost all religions teach that God is mightier than Satan (opposing gods and goddesses in paganism) and that Satan is mightier than man. Satan does not believe in freedom, but God is the source of freedom. On this basis, it is irrational to leave the powerless man in the hands of Satan and ask him to save himself.

This is why Christian evangelism resonates with people and answers questions of salvation more completely than other beliefs.

WEEK 2: Jesus is the Master Teacher of Influential Evangelism

The Good News of salvation is good for everybody, and must therefore be proclaimed influentially in order to draw people's attention. Since Jesus is the revelation of the God who saves people, He Himself is therefore the Good News, the source of Good News and the ultimate authority in teaching how best to reach out to people.

Jesus is able to link every question of life to salvation, even the questions that are raised by His enemies. Opening the eyes of your 'enemy' to understand the truth is influential evangelism in itself. Influential evangelism cares for the lives of enemies too, helping everybody to respond to their God-given conscience that seeks a meaningful life.

Somebody once asked Jesus a dangerous political question: *"Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?"* (Luke 20: 22, MKJV). In response, Jesus asked for a coin in order to help the man to understand that Caesar deserved to get tribute since the coin carried Caesar's image. In the same way, God deserved tribute from the man since he was created by God and carried His image. In other words, the man would be able to get the true response to his life questions if he gave his heart to God, his Creator.

Isn't it fascinating that in a short conversation, Jesus helps His politically-inclined opposition to understand that surrendering to God is the response to all his questions? Jesus was able to relate every question to salvation, and we need to be prepared to do the same.

WEEK 3: Influential Evangelism is Agreeing with Christ

Evangelism is the expression of the Good News with our mouth under the leadership of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is a mission springing from our covenant with Christ, obligating us to teach whatever Jesus taught us to teach others. The leadership of the Holy Spirit reminds us of the words of Christ and comforts us with His presence. Jesus said:

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you. (John 14: 26, MKJV)

So according to this covenant, we need to believe and accept that the leadership of the Holy Spirit is unceasing in our evangelism efforts. We also need to make sure that all the words we pass to others and all the attitudes we show manifest the heart of our Saviour Jesus. Our evangelism is to 'pave the ground' for Jesus Christ to save the person with whom we have established relationship. We go to people, take risk if necessary, but all is to prepare the way for the Saviour to come and save. It is the revelation of Christ that makes our evangelism influential.

Christ will not reveal Himself through our mission if we do not represent Him or agree with Him fully through all aspects of our lives.

WEEK 4: Influential Evangelism Calls for Full-hearted Allegiance to Christ

We are followers of Christ by the grace of God. God first helped us to understand His immeasurable love through Christ for us and then convinced us to subordinate willingly our worldly happiness, seeking instead the will of Christ as the supreme object in our lives and our relationship with others. The value of our full dependency on Christ must be manifested in our evangelism and is what makes our evangelism influential. For this reason, Jesus said:

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (Matthew 16:24, MKJV)

And after his encounter with Jesus Christ, Paul said:

I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf. (Galatians 2:20)

Paul gives every right to Christ, and as a result, Christ engages him fully in the Kingdom of God. His life and works become entirely different to what they had been before. Because of Christ, Paul is comforted in all his trials and sufferings. He derives all his energies, courage and zeal from the grace of God who loves the world. He gives every right to Christ, in order to be able to carry the life-giving words of God into the life of others.

WEEK 5: Influential Evangelism Addresses People's Conscience Plainly

Jesus and His disciples endeavoured to persuade people by addressing the word of life to their consciences plainly. He did this so that they might recognise God's requirement of them, be fully persuaded of the reality of that requirement, and therefore live out their lives with deepest gratitude for God. The message of Christ is for all humankind, but it needs to reach the depth of human mind, heart and soul through conscience. All our motives in ministry must be clearly and plainly known to people – this will help people to recognise our integrity and to see that we are sincere in our approaches.

Those who live by the truth are plain, simple and honest; they cannot hide the truth; they come into the light and manifest it with sincerity in order to convince sinners' hearts and encourage them to receive the divine revelation of Christ. That's why the Apostle Paul said:

But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor adulterating the Word of God, but by the revelation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Jesus designed His evangelistic plan in a manner that does not allow any dishonest practice or teaching, so that no one would be able to accuse Him of any falsehood.

WEEK 6: Influential evangelism requires a price with a continual care and awareness

Yea, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12, MKJV)

The Bible tells us that it is risky to proclaim faith in Christ and fight the darkness. It is risky because we are living in a territory that is strongly attached to darkness and thereby does not tolerate sincerity, true friendship, morality and peace. It is hard for the world to stand up to rational thinking and find out that the absolute justice, holiness, peace and love are what makes life beautiful on earth. Not only this: to defend its relative and sinful stand, the world has also been trying to impose various kinds of restrictions on Christians and to silence them in our so-called civilised era.

For the world and for the captives in this world, the foundation for relationships is hostility, but for Christ it is love and kindness. Love that paves the ground for reconciliation and peace, not harshness. You cannot build a long-lasting friendship with people through hostility.

You have two choices in this world concerning threats: either to become a threat to others or to face the threat with wisdom and love in Christ. For this reason, Jesus asked us to face the risk or threat:

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (Matthew 16:24, MKJV)

Evangelism in Christ is costly.

WEEK 7: Influential evangelism reveals good examples

In evangelism, Jesus loves to show true examples to people in order to prove His truthfulness and to draw their attention. His aim in evangelism is to show us to people as samples of His work in order to amaze them with our understanding, thoughts, words and actions. Our evangelism will demonstrate through us that every old thing in us has gone and is replaced with new things; not only are we free from Satan, but we have also conquered him and reached a position of heavenly nobility, crowned for eternal freedom and joy. We are now the light and salt of Christ in the world in every aspect: philosophically, doctrinally, socially, morally and in everything.

Our example will display to people why we have put our trust in Christ and why we are asking them to do the same. It is because Jesus is the only One who has overthrown the kingdom of Satan. See what we read in the Gospel:

... He sends out judgment to victory. And in His name the nations shall trust. (Matthew 12: 20c-21, MKJV)

The Gospel says that Jesus destroys the work of Satan and sends justice to victory in people's lives. This is why we put our trust in Him and chose to be united with Him. He has become our Commander-in-Chief, our King, and we have become His ambassadors. We go to others for Him, with His spiritual visa and citizenship; with His culture and with the identity He has given us in order to touch the hearts of people.

WEEK 8: Unconditional love makes evangelism influential

Love is the greatest mark of Jesus Christ. The Gospel says:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16, MKJV)

Jesus is famous for His loving and caring attitudes. He also desired His disciples be known in the world for their love and care, not for religious creeds and rituals. His disciples are not to be known for exemplifying the world's conditional values that do not lead to a long-lasting relationship or friendship, but for His own love

that binds them to one another as the members of one body, creating eternal unity and harmony amongst them and preparing them on all occasions to act towards one another as members of one body. It is this unity that impacts others and leads them to Christ. Evangelism in and for Christ starts with the active love of Christ sparked first amongst His own followers, and then through them among others.

Jesus' fame is His love for the nations; He has to be made famous for His love for nations in our evangelism. He said:

By this all shall know that you are My disciples, if you have love toward one another. (John 13:35, MKJV).

WEEK 9: Influential evangelism is the evangelism of the blessed people

If we meditate upon the evangelistic mission of Christ and His faithful followers, we will discover significant principles of faith in Christian evangelism. Salvation does not mean only what God has given to us, but also what flows from within us in order to bless others. The Lord Jesus said:

He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38, MKJV)

Salvation is like running water. Running water does not stay at its source: instead, it makes streams and reaches beyond to unreached places, watering the land that is in thirst. Running waters run through the ups and downs of their route, passing every kind of obstacle and making a way to reach far lands, enriching them with the beauty of plants. Nothing can stop this water from running. When these spiritual streams cross over denominational boundaries and come together, they become huge and powerful rivers which are the glory of the lands around them.

Salvation is God's channel of continual blessings flowing from one person's life into others' lives. Therefore, as a Christian, I should not keep to myself the blessings of salvation that have flowed into me, because the blessed should be a blessing to others. We are the followers of the One who blessed the world with His life on the Cross.

WEEK 10: Influential evangelism is the evangelism of free people but not captives

Apostle Paul said:

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25, MKJV).

Those who are saved and freed by the Spirit of God are called to demonstrate their freedom through evangelism, walking by the same Spirit into others' lives and bearing fruits.

Freedom must bear freedom. Jesus is free by nature and thereby produces freedom. That's why He said:

The Spirit of the Lord is on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed. (Luke 4:18, MKJV)

Jesus inspires a freedom that no religion and philosophy in the world is able to do. By Him alone, eternal life and glory are given to us. In a similar way, our freedom in Christ must also pave the way for freedom of others. Eternal freedom reigns in us and the proclamation of this eternal freedom convinces people that Jesus is trustworthy, since He is the only One able to abolish the spiritual death in their lives. They will withdraw from others who are not able to release them from the kingdom of Satan and put their trust in Christ.

Those who remain under the power of death and uncertainty do not have freedom to proclaim it. It is the absolute triumph over death that tunes the life of the Christian into evangelism.

WEEK 11: Influential evangelism is based on full confidence

Faith in Christ teaches us that He is the absolute sovereign supreme Lord over everything and there is nothing to stop His followers from going and setting people free from captivity. It also teaches us that a Christian's faith and ministry are based on the full confidence and power of the Spirit of Christ, not on human uncertainty that cannot overcome Satan. To save the lost, we cannot derive the saving principles from the ideas of a lost person who does not have adequate power to save himself. So our surrender to Jesus is the full surrender which gives us full confidence to be the mouths of His freedom. This is why Paul says:

Now thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and He revealing through us the odour of the knowledge of Him in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14, MKJV)

So, the first point in evangelism is not "How can I affect others?" It is that I belong to Jesus Christ; He has established confidence in me, His Spirit is in and on me, I have reached spiritual nobility that is in and from Him and I am victorious.

So the victory in Christ is the spiritual visa of our confidence that shines through our words and actions among people. Not only this, His presence with us has also made our confidence full in order to triumph daily. That's why Christ Himself said:

.... without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5, MKJV).

WEEK 12: Influential evangelism is when God's Spirit is present

Who is able to follow God without the Spirit of God? Who is able to accept God's requirements without the Spirit of God? Who is able to live, to go and speak for God and to lead people to God without the presence of the Spirit of God? Who is able to live or to act victoriously without the Spirit of God? The entire Bible teaches us that the presence of the Spirit of God is the prerequisite of evangelism for God. Moses said to God:

If Your presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here. (Exodus 33:15, MKGV)

Moses knew that if God did not go with him, others would not be able to distinguish any difference between themselves and God's people. For this reason, he asked God's presence to be with him and his people.

Jesus also said to His disciples that after receiving the Holy Spirit, they could be His witnesses everywhere (Acts 1:8).

It is the Presence of the Spirit of God in us that can manifest eternal life in us and distinguish us from those who are in bondage. The Spirit of God with His supernatural activities through us confirms that our life is in and for Christ, and we are His salt and light to the world. If the Spirit of God is not with us and we are not in a better position, what difference then in us will be able to amaze people and motivate them to listen to us?

WEEK 13: Influential evangelism is accompanied by supernatural power

Unlike similar efforts of other religions, evangelism in Christ starts from and by God. God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ in order to evangelise humanity and give them hope of eternal life. No god (or 'ultimate reality') in any other world religion can reveal himself (itself) in order to build a personal relationship with people. They are impersonal in nature and irreconcilable with relationship. But our God is relational and the very person to reveal the beauty of heaven to us, and with His supernatural power to free us from the bondage of Satan.

As the followers of Christ, not only are we clothed in eternal life and immune to eternal death, we are also sealed by the Spirit of God and made His children. We are given such an advantageous life that the Mighty Creator of the universe is with us as a caring and loving Father till the end. Life in God is inclusive of all good, shines with supernatural power and destroys every trace of the darkness in life. That's why the seventy, who were sent by Jesus two by two, came back to Him and said:

Lord, even the demons are subject to us through Your name. (Luke 10:19, MKJV)

Jesus Himself confirmed this supernatural power in His followers' ministry while He was living among them who were casting demons out of the bodies of people in His Name. He said to them:

I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning. (Luke 10:18, MKJV).

WEEK 14: Influential evangelism is the evangelism of God's sons and daughters

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus has transferred us from the kingdom of darkness and established our hearts and mind on the higher spiritual ground, which is the fullness of life and has power over Satan, sin and death. Satan cannot climb to this heavenly height and house. It is on this higher ground that we are called God's sons and daughters and are enabled to lead people to this house. Since we have reached such a heavenly excellence, we are therefore able to pull down the kingdom of Satan from the heights of people's hearts and to pave the ground for Jesus to set them free so that they can reside with us in this height, sharing the victory and holiness with us.

Like Jesus, the children of this higher spiritual ground are always victorious. Though Jesus was humiliated during His life in the flesh on earth, in Spirit He was always on this higher ground and for this reason He amazed many people with His supernatural miracles.

Because the children of a house can represent their house better than strangers, we as the sons and daughters of God and the members of His household can represent the Kingdom of our heavenly Father better than strangers. Strangers cannot talk about God, since they do not have any intimate relationship with God and do not know Him. How can someone introduce God if he does not know God?

WEEK 15: Influential Evangelism Has Power to Stand for Truth

Those who are committed to the excellence of heaven have the mighty Spirit dominating their thoughts, words and deeds, so that despite all difficulties, they have power to overcome evil, to stand for the Truth and to do greater things in Jesus' Name.

Through the Spirit of Christ we stand on the prophetic ground of the Living, Loving, Mighty and Holy God that identifies us with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world. This expression allows the Spirit of God to change us through His love and to stir the fire of evangelism in us to stand for truth. The Spirit of God never leaves His followers indifferent; He changes them and gives them zeal for truth. He uses them as the fragrance of truth in the life of others.

On the other hand, the Spirit of God lives in His followers with all His attributes so that they can think truthfully, speaking and acting in accordance with the truth. The Scriptures say:

For they who are according to the flesh mind the things of flesh, but they who are according to the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5, MKJV)

We are sent to present the perfect revelation of Jesus without compromising. Compromising gives legitimacy to untruth and paves the ground for more ungodly motives. Evangelism, on the other hand, means to free people from all ungodliness.

WEEK 16: Influential evangelism is equipped by the full armour of the Spirit

Since Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of God's Deity, He lives in us with His fullness and occupies our hearts with His full power and armour. That's why the Gospel says:

Put on the whole armour of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
(Ephesians 6: 11, MKJV)

The whole armour of God is to us a most precious gift with an abundance of power, authority, righteousness, wisdom, joy, peace, comfort, grace, mercy and all other good things in order to supply our needs in life and evangelism. Satan is not happy with our evangelism in Christ. He throws his arrows at us continually, and we need to put on the full armour of Christ in order to stay safe.

We are able to bring the mission of Christ to completion in the lives of others with the full power of God. Therefore, it is so important for us to have a right understanding of the spiritual weapons we need for evangelism. God's purpose in giving us the full armour is the full use of it. To fight the devil we need to clothe ourselves with the full armour of God in order to have sufficient power to subdue him and free people.

Satan is a strong enemy, but when we put on the fullness of Christ, he will not be able to stand our nobility anymore.

WEEK 17: Influential evangelism does not know age barriers

As the apostle Peter said to the followers of Christ:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for possession, so that you might speak of the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9, MKJV)

All the followers of Christ – young, young adult and old – are to reach out to people and express the praises of their hearts for what God has done in their lives. God even chooses infants to impact others:

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have ordained strength, because of ones vexing You, to cause the enemy and the avenger to cease. (Psalm 8:2, MKJV)

Even those who are naturally the weakest and unable to take responsibility are ordained in Christ with strength to reject Satan. If God can amaze the world through the simplest unlearned babies, what about those who have the capability of learning and teaching? The Bible aims to prepare everyone to be the mouth of God. As soon as the Spirit of the Lord takes ownership over us, through a supernatural miracle He makes us powerful tools in revealing the schemes of Satan among nations and being channels for their salvation. No matter how old or young we are or how hard or dangerous the situation might be, God works victoriously through us for others if we allow His Spirit to work in us according to His words and desire.

WEEK 18: Influential evangelism carries the burden of others through, in and with Christ

Humanity which pursues its own mind and promises itself liberty has ended up in a totally wearisome situation, because of its fallen nature. Its reliance on its own wisdom, philosophy and power has resulted in brokenness and failure. The waves of its failure and chaotic life have also hardened relationships. People have become weary and are in desperate need of someone who is able to ease their yoke and lighten their burden; someone who is able to bring them into a true sense of discerning their mistakes, the insufficiency of their mind and power to lead a harmonious life; someone who is able to encourage them to put their trust in God.

That person is Jesus Christ. He said:

Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

The highest plan in the mission of Christ is to help people to throw off the yoke of their own mind, of their religion and philosophy, and to take on His yoke and burden in order to conform to God and reside in peace.

This is the heart of evangelism in Christ; it starts in us first. We put the yoke of Christ on our own shoulder, satisfying our own souls first, and then become ready to carry the burden of others through and in and with Christ so that they can yoke themselves to Him and reside in comfort.

WEEK 19: Influential evangelism carries courage

Jesus said:

I have spoken these things to you so that you might have peace in Me. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. (John 16:33, MKJV)

Jesus knows that we always encounter a battle between a loving God and a loveless world, and come face to face with difficulties, as He Himself did. He calls each of us to follow His footsteps and speak the truth boldly. The hardship that may come from individuals, families, societies or governments might give us pain, but they cannot diminish the power of our victory in Christ.

Apostle Paul says that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39). In his evangelism, Paul faced many problems, but he was always courageous and joyful in Jesus. He spoke and wrote boldly and joyfully, and like a heavenly lightning flashed his light everywhere and won many souls for God.

The Gospel is encouraging us to take courage in the victory of Christ and rejoice in it if we want to impact people. It was the courage of Christ in Paul that influenced the Caesar's family members while he was in prison and some gave their hearts to Christ (Philippians 4:22). And it is the courage of our persecuted brothers and sisters in persecuting countries now that impacts even their persecutors.

WEEK 20: Influential evangelism is a joyful evangelism

Joy is rooted in our salvation by God's grace. We were going to die, but God saved us and gave us a life better than the most advantageous life of this world, so that we might live and rejoice with eternal confidence. Joy in Christ is different to the joy of the world. The joy of the world is provisional; it does not stay long. Joy in Christ is a heavenly gift, and Christ uses that joy in us to bring people into the fullness of it. He says:

... ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24, MKJV)

God does not only rejoice in our salvation: He also rejoices when we become a tool in His hand for the salvation of others. Christian life and evangelism do not happen without joy. In fact, evangelism is the overflow of the joy of salvation from one's life into others' lives. The reason that evangelism is meaningless in all other religions is because they do not have salvation and are not able to assure people of salvation. Their evangelists themselves have not tasted salvation but merely talk about it. If you have not tasted salvation, how will you be able to talk about it and its joy? Wherever salvation is not present, death is at work and there will not be any joy. The evangelism of those who follow Christ is meaningful because they are united with God, have tasted the joy of salvation and cannot hide it.