**I Hate Evangelism**

*By Brad Olson, Psy.D.,M.Div.*

I hate evangelism.

I’m told that it’s my job to evangelize, and I’ve been on every guilt trip my Evangelical upbringing provided me. Since I’ve been so blessed by the saving grace of Jesus, all my inhibitions and hesitations should be wiped away. Who have you witnessed to today? How many souls have you ushered into the kingdom? How come you’re so afraid to speak up? If you’re a good Christian, you’ll speak up anytime, anyplace, and bravely tell anyone how they are going to Hell If they don’t accept Jesus into their heart as a personal Savior.

I should go on the missions trip, so I can tell others about Jesus. I should go on that Spring Break trip to Florida, so I can tell all those lost souls about Jesus, on the beach, while they’re half-naked and drunk, even give them the “Four Spiritual Laws”. I should be willing to go anywhere, anytime, to live in a mud hut somewhere, and tell the lost about Jesus. And if I don’t, I must not really appreciate what Jesus has done for me. Or maybe I’m just a bad Christian.

*I hate evangelism.*

Then I feel all judgmental, & I question myself. Am I wrong? I wonder to sometimes, is the guy on the street corner holding up the sign and shouting through a microphone really making a difference? Maybe God is honoring him because he’s honoring God? When the old man leaves a Bible tract on the table, is that reaching someone with Good News? I don’t know, maybe God honors that too?

If evangelism is so core to who we are as believers, then why is it so painful for us to do?

I can’t evangelize, what will I say? What if I get it wrong? I mean, this is a person’s soul and eternity at stake here. I don’t know enough about the Bible to be able to evangelize. I don’t have the gift of evangelism. I was relieved to eventually discover that I had the gift of teaching. That was a lot easier to swallow.

Oh lord, what have we done to your message? How has good news become so dreadful to deliver?

Terry grew up with me. I had known him since the 5th grade. We enjoyed sports together. We played on the same teams over the years. One day, In the middle of a tennis match, In the middle of his serve, He asks from the other end of the court, “If I was going to read the Bible, what Bible should I read?” I casually answered with a modern translation. After the game, I asked him why he would ask that question. He said, “You and Lori seem so different. You’re not like all the rest. I can’t explain it, but that’s what I want.”

I was blown away. I never mentioned a word about Jesus to him. Never quoted a scripture verse, or asked him if he were to die tonight, was he sure he knew where he was going? I never made sure he understood the four spiritual laws. Terry lives for Christ today.

Years later, Dan moved in upstairs with his girlfriend. One day he asked us to go to dinner and a play together. I wondered what his intentions were. Was he another Amway salesman? And even more than that, what would I have in common with a non-Christian? We obliged. We laughed, we had a beer, we talked, and we had fun. I enjoyed the time… and to my pleasant surprise, I discovered a friend.

We both loved racquetball. So we played. 2, maybe 3 times a week. We liked to talk after the game. No big agenda, just talk. It took about 3 months for the conversation to turn towards God stuff, not because I had an agenda, but because Dan wanted to talk about it. One day, in what seemed to be God’s great sense of humor, I heard a familiar question. “Brad, I’m thinking about reading the Bible, and there so many versions out there, what kind should I get?” I could almost hear “The Twilight Zone” music playing in the background.

I remember one day as we’re sitting on the floor dripping with sweat from a hard fought game, Dan had to leave quickly to pick up his daughters, but thanked me first for the times we have had talking about God. I sat there and reflected for a few minutes after he left. I thought, “I didn’t plan on evangelizing Dan or Terry… Wow, maybe God’s using me to tell His story?” How cool is that? And I don’t even have to be an evangelist… ‘cuz… I hate evangelism…

About 6 months later, after a round of golf on a warm summer day, just the two of us sat down at a table in the clubhouse bar to add our scores and relax. Dan came walking back to the table with a pitcher of beer. He sat down, and poured 2 glasses. Without saying anything else, he raised his glass and looked at me, with a little tear in his eye, and said, “Brad, I can’t tell you how meaningful my life has become since I found Jesus. I am so grateful. Thank you.”

Not only was Jesus messing with my view of evangelism, he was messing with my legalistic Baptist upbringing. You can’t raise a beer AND be grateful to Jesus… can you?

I hate evangelism. But I love sharing the story of Jesus in my life with friends who care to listen.

**Luke 10:27 (NLT)**

***He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"***