

Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

December 5, 2017

Perhaps I should have written this particular column two weeks ago, before Thanksgiving (the week of my auto woes), but as we move through these most family-oriented weeks of the year, I do want to offer a bit of encouragement for prayer and sharing as we all spend time with seldom-seen members of our families.

You've seen the attachment that follows before. I occasionally send it out at this time of the year, but it's been three years since I did.

The background for this handout is 1 Peter 3:15-16, where we are told, "*You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.*" We don't have opportunity to share our faith in every conversation, but we have many more opportunities than we take, often because we're not sure what to say.

The main thing to remember is that to be a "witness" for Jesus is very similar to what it means to be a witness in court—we talk about what we ourselves have seen, heard, and experienced. Sharing our faith is not about badgering people, guiltning people, or arguing with people. Sharing our faith is simply telling someone else how our relationship with God through Jesus in the power of God's Spirit is helping us to hold life together. We talk about our own Hope and Help in Christ.

There are three parts to this handout. The first part describes "Six Principles for Sharing Your Faith." These principles can help to reduce our anxiety and encourage relaxed sharing as God gives opportunity.

The second part simply uses John 3:16—with which most people will have some familiarity—as a way to share **God's Purpose, Our Problem, God's Provision,** and **Our Decision** to accept God's offer of salvation through Jesus, the Babe in the Manger. Some suggestions are offered about how to move through that conversation.

And the third part, the circle diagram, highlights the various circles of relationship we experience every day, and especially during holidays. One way to prepare for the opportunities God may bring is to pray through the names in those circles and ask God to provide quiet opportunities for conversation with persons whose relationship with Jesus is not yet what it might become.

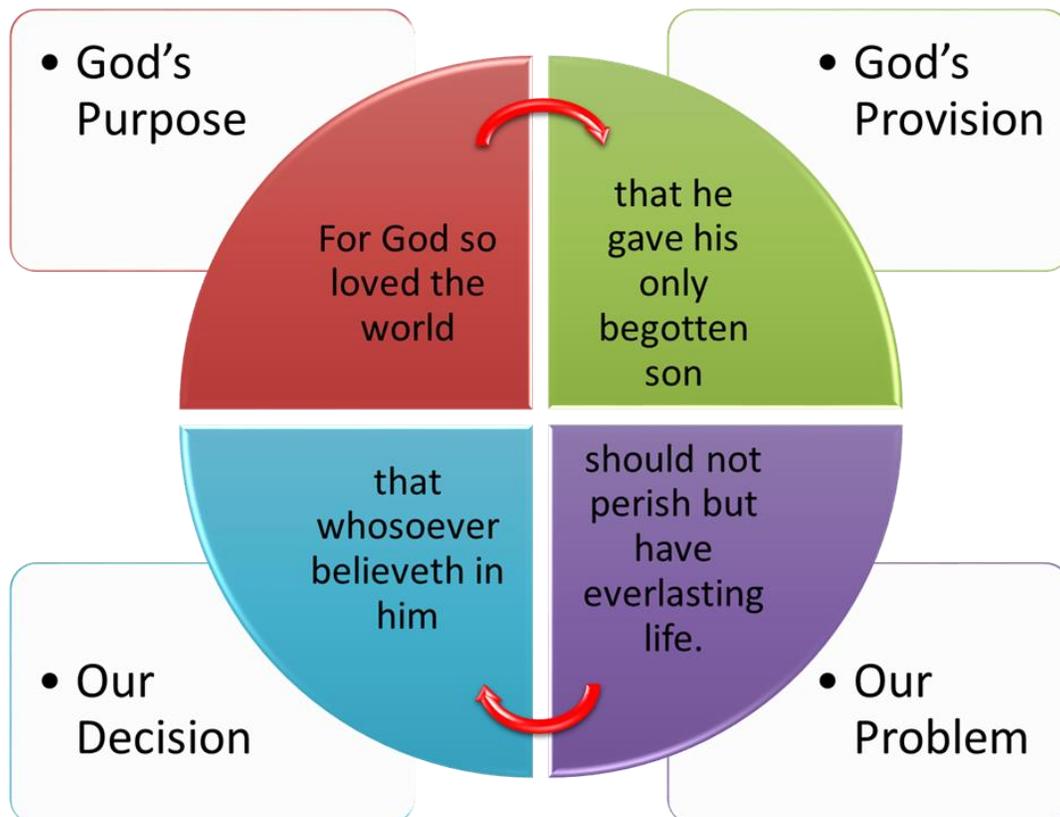
The happy thing is that the circles of our lives overlap, and if each of us pursues this "Audi method of evangelism," we'll touch every life in the world. That would make for a joy-full CHRISTmas, indeed!



Can You Tell Me How I Can Become A Christian?

❖ SIX PRINCIPLES FOR SHARING YOUR FAITH

1. **The Principle of Responsibility**: The work of salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit. We give witness to what we ourselves have experienced, but it is the Holy Spirit who causes persons to open their hearts to Jesus (John 16:8).
2. **The Principle of Respect**: Because every person is created in God's image, whenever we speak of Jesus to others, we speak with respect, with clarity, and with love (Genesis 1:26-27).
3. **The Principle of "Loading the Heart Drive"**: The Bible tells us to "hide God's Word in our hearts" so that we will understand God's purposes (Psalm 119:11; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 19:7-14).
4. **The Principle of a Clear Spirit**: By God's grace, we live our lives in ways consistent with the Gospel, so that we are not ashamed of our testimony. We "walk the walk" (Colossians 1:10).
5. **The Principle of Current Experience**: "You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it" (1 Peter 3:15).
6. **The Principle of Spiritual Breathing** (from Bill Bright):
 - **"Exhale"**: "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong" (1 John 1:9)
 - **"Inhale"**: "let the Holy Spirit fill and control you" (Ephesians 5:18)
 - **Trust God**: If we are faithful students of the Word, "the Holy Spirit will teach you what needs to be said even as you are standing there" (Luke 12:12).



1. “Does this make sense to you?”
2. “Is there any reason you wouldn’t want God to do this in your life?”

❖ Don't pressure, but do give a clear opportunity to respond. Conversion is God's work.

Prayer of Invitation, “The Sinner’s Prayer”

(There is really no one version of this prayer—these are not “magic words.” Use words that fit what you have talked about together. Even better, prompt them as they use their own words.)

Dear God, thank you that you love me, and that you have paid the debt for my sin. I agree with you that I have sinned and am in need of your forgiveness. I ask you to forgive me of my sin, to cleanse my heart, to make me your child, and to begin to remake my life so that I will become more like Jesus. Guide me through your Holy Spirit as I discover the purpose you have for my life. Thank you for saving me! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

❖ After the prayer:

1. Emphasize that faith is anchored in God's promises, not in our feelings. Sometimes people feel significant emotion after a prayer of repentance; sometimes they don't.
 - Emphasize Jesus' promise to the new believer: “*I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life [PRESENT TENSE]. They will never be condemned for their sins [FUTURE TENSE], but they have already passed from death into life” [PAST TENSE] (John 5:24).*
2. Talk about the importance of baptism (Matthew 28:19-20) & church membership (Acts 2:47; Hebrews 10:23-25) for growing faith.
3. Encourage immediate witness: Who can you tell about your decision who will rejoice with you? Who do you know who needs to find what you have found?

