

Evangelism: Aren't We Just Talking to Ourselves? by

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By Tim Timmons

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Timmons:

Where I went to school, which was a Christian College, you get thrown out for even holding one of these in your hand. There's an ace of squared ace. I know what they call, though. How long do I have till eight? All the time I want. Thank you. You wait till you get up here and then you ask. You never ask before you get up here because then they can't say the truth down there. You see, they're supposed to give you all the time that you're led. And I have been led to speak for 3 hours this evening. You may not have been led to listen. That's the only problem. And I'm quite concerned about that.

Tonight I want to speak to you on a very exciting subject to me because it's exactly what I do all the time. It's being involved in evangelism.

Don't pay attention to the program. I've been losing that all week. I do appreciate the doctorate I've been given this week. It's been exciting to get that honorary doctorate here at Biola. And my wife thanks you and just makes me feel better all over.

What's talking to you about Evangelism? Aren't we just talking to ourselves? But primarily I want to make you think now only 5% of the world think, 15% think. They think 80% would rather die than think so. I have a big marketplace when I go out to speak to make people think.

Now, thinking is the process of expanding your perspective on life. It's opening up your perspective much wider than it already is. There's nothing wrong with thinking. As a matter of fact, God created it that way. And yet many times we have stifled that kind of thing.

Even with a few verses, we try to stifle it, but thinking is expanding your perspective on life. Now, some of you could be coming from a different kind of perspective or a faulty perspective. This evening, there are three faulty perspectives I want to just open up with before we move into what I'm after this evening. The first is a passive perspective. It's when you know what to do, but you don't do it. You know what to do, but you don't do it. You're committed to the process of growth. You're committed to the process of following the Lord. You're committed to the process of whatever, and yet you don't do it.

It's what James calls a hearer of the word and not a doer, but a hero who deludes himself. And many people who are hearers who delude themselves. I think this is how it happens. They hear someone speak. They hear it emotionally and psychologically, logically. And they say, or if you're a Baptist, Amen. Or if you're a Jew, Hebrew, Christian, you go, Umain. But either way, you're saying it's right there and you feel like because you identified with it emotionally. You walk out saying, wow, I agree with that. And your heart is lifted up, and you're so excited. And

you get out and you go home and you go back to your room or whatever, and you share it with someone else who hasn't heard it yet.

And they say [inaudible 00:03:28] now they're excited about it, and they gather some other people. Now you're speaking on the subject already. You see this new insight you just heard. You identified with it emotionally, but you didn't apply it yet. You haven't had time. You're too busy speaking on it at this point. You see, it's a passive perspective, knowing what to do but not doing it. Committed, but not involved. It's like the kamikaze pilot who went on 33 missions. He was committed, but he wasn't involved. He's supposed to go once and don't come back. We'll give you a medal to your wife. All right?

The second faulty perspective is a partial perspective. And this is where you don't know enough to act wisely. You don't know enough to act wisely. In the counseling center that we have in Newport Beach, I stir up the trouble, and a group of men put them back together for me. But people will come in and wife will come in. She'll sit down and tell about the quad she's living with. And you get so excited about beating the guy up yourself. You can't believe what a Royal quad this guy is. And then he comes in the next day and he gives you his side of the story. Now, you'd like to give him a medal for living there with that woman. It's a partial perspective. Not knowing enough to act wisely. Maybe some of you are there this evening.

The third faulty perspective is a prejudice perspective. This perspective is where I don't want to be confused with the facts. My mind is already made up. I'll listen to what I want to listen to. I'll hear what I want to hear. I'll believe what I want to believe. But please don't overwhelm me with

any facts. It's like the man who thought he was dead. His wife took him into the shrink, and she says, Doc, he thinks he's dead. The shrink says, hey, you're not dead. I deal with people all the time. You're not dead, believe me. He said, no, Doc, I know I'm dead. I died a year ago. We sent him on a research project for two weeks, checking out autopsies, doing all kinds of research in medical journals. He came back in and the doctor said, okay, what did you find out? He said, well, it's very clear. The evidence is overwhelming. Dead people don't bleed. He said, that's beautiful. You got exactly what I wanted you to get. The doctor came around behind his desk and stuck him in the arm with a needle and blood spurted out. And he said, Good night, dead people do bleed. And that's a prejudice perspective.

And I suppose many of you, as I open up this area of evangelism tonight will be coming from a prejudice perspective. But wherever you are, get rid of some of those Blinders for a second and open it up, because I want to talk about evangelism. Aren't we just talking to ourselves?

There's a story about a man who walks up to another man in the corner and he says, you want to go to heaven? The guy said, no. What do you mean, no? I thought everybody wanted to go to heaven when they die. Oh, when I die. I thought you were getting a group to go right now. I'm not talking about that kind of evangelism. A Minister walked on a bus and sat down next to a drunk, and he said, you're going to hell. And the guy said, Good night. I'm on the wrong bus.

I'm not really going to talk about that either. I'm not talking about the run and gun type. What I want to do is I want to talk about an approach, an approach to evangelism, an approach to the world, to non-believers, so that we communicate something the message of the Lord Jesus Christ

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and his payment for sin, but we communicate it to people who need it rather than just talking to ourselves.

I think what we've done in evangelism is we've equated evangelism with closing the deal. We've equated evangelism with closing the deal. Have you closed the deal lately? And the guilt trip takes off from there. How many deals have you closed? How about you? And how about this? Last year? Did you close in this last year, we narrowed down evangelism just to closing the deal. And yet when you look through the scriptures, you may find one instance where you could say another person closed the deal and actually close it up for God right there. And I wouldn't even accept that one.

You find a very hard line as you move through the scriptures, and you have a very hard time trying to prove that anybody closed any deal, because in one Corinthians three, it says that we're to sow and water and let God close the deal. He'll cause the growth, he'll cause the increase. He does a much better job. You see, he does it forever.

So deal closing is not evangelism. Evangelism is much wider than that. And so as we move through these principles of evangelism this evening, I want to just open up your perspective. I'm not talking about a method, so please don't be upset if you have a beautiful method. I'm excited for that. There are the four laws and the five steps and the 14 hops and many other approaches. It doesn't make any difference about your method. I want to open up your perspective tonight on evangelism because I'm convinced the more I get out there in the secular world that we've been talking to ourselves too much. About 75% to 80% of my speaking now, and I'm in professional

speaking. At this point, 75, 80% of my speaking is to non-believer audience. And through those audiences, I'm finding some interesting insights on what's happening as far as relating the gospel to these people.

I want to move through four principles this evening that I think will help open us up to expanding our perspective on evangelism. The first principle this evening is the principle of exposure. The principle of exposure. The principle of exposure says, if we write an evangelistic book and only sell it in Christian bookstores, aren't we just talking to ourselves?

If we create an evangelistic radio and television program and we only air them on Christian radio stations or Christian television stations, aren't we just talking to ourselves? If we only have evangelism within the four Holy walls, aren't we just talking to ourselves? If we write an evangelistic article and only put it in Moody Monthly, aren't we just talking to ourselves? Evangelism, we're talking to ourselves too much. The principal exposure says, you've got to go out where people are. You've got to go where people are. That's where you expose them to the Lord Jesus Christ. You've got to go to where they are. And Jesus deals with it even more erratically than that. He says that you are the salt of the Earth and the light of the world.

Salt was used as a preservative to counteract the decay in meat. And the interesting thing about salt, in order to be effective is that the salt had to touch the meat or it wasn't effective. You did not put a salt shaker on a shelf and a piece of meat right next to it and say, all right, go to it. The salt had to touch the meat. If we are to be the salt of the Earth, we've got to go out where people are. And we've got to do something more with those people than be on the other end of a booklet

somewhere, or to be on the other end of some kind of track, or to be on the other end of just inviting them to this meeting and that meeting and this meeting and that meeting, we've got to do something more realistic than that. We've got to go where people are. I'm finding audiences all over the place who are willing to listen to principles that work, and I'm having a ball.

One of my first audiences that I ever spoke to was the Jewish Defense League National Officers. This was an exciting group because they're not excited about what I had to say. And as I opened up there, I was asked by the Rabbi to come in and speak to them on why I believe Jesus is the Messiah. This isn't one of the better topics for the JDL. They're not excited about that. I want you to understand they bruise bodies and bomb buildings and do wonderful things to people. And so I was using some humor there at the beginning.

And only the Rabbi and I were laughing. It was bad there in the room. And then I slipped some things, and I hadn't told him yet. And he quit laughing like the Messiah is coming again. That bothered him just a tad. And then I didn't have anything else to laugh about. So I quit laughing. And two weeks later, they threatened to kill me. Wonderful experience. About two months after that, I was at Southern Methodist University, speaking to a group of students on a dorm floor. About 40 of them. I was speaking on my Spooky message. And as I opened up my Spooky message, which is on the occult and exorcism and all kinds of weird things, even throwing the Rapture there really exciting message. I opened up the whole thing, and I opened up for questions. The guy in the front row raised his hand and said, I disagree with everything you just said. I couldn't believe it. Nobody told me in seminary how to handle that one. So I said, well, tell us about it. He talks and he talks and he talks. Finally he sat down. He said, I'm against you.

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This is quiet in there as it is right now. They look at him. They look back at me. They looked back at him and me. No one knew what to do. The kid had said it all about this time. His nose started bleeding. I couldn't have timed it better myself. It was fabulous.

And because of the spooky, weird nature of the meeting, they thought, I just zapped the kid for disagreeing with me. He said, what have you done to me? And he ran down the hall. Everybody sat there. Nobody moved. I was scared to death myself. I didn't know what happened. I pulled myself together and I said, Is there anybody else here who disagrees with me?

And through those experiences there, I began to get excited about speaking to hospital audiences. So then I decided, Why not do it on purpose? And so I started moving throughout the country, speaking. I put a high speed on my head, so I became valuable. And so I started moving throughout corporations and all kinds of places. I've had a ball.

I was in a PTA meeting for a dad's night in our community when I first moved to Newport Beach about three and a half years ago. And as I was invited to come in and speak to the dads, I tried to overwhelm them with biblical principles. And then at the end, I said, you know where I got this? They didn't know where I got it. They just sat there and looked at each other and thought, well, he's got a degree, doesn't he? Does. I said, I read this in a book. Can you believe that? I read this whole thing in a book. I say, you could have read the book. Didn't even have to come tonight. Incredible. I read in a book. Get your pens out. I want you to get the title down. These guys are fumbling around for the pens. They get it out. I said, the title is Buy a bulk.

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Nobody writes a word at this point. Everybody knows how to spell that word. Now they're looking for the hammer lock. You see, he's going to close the deal. He's going to get us.

I open up how the Bible has a game plan for life that works because there's a person behind it that you need to know. After that meeting that evening, no closing deals, nothing like that. Three different men went to people they knew they were believers in the community accepted the Christ. That's exciting. The next week, I spoke to the women of the PTA. They normally had 50 women out. They had 250 women sitting out there in this packed little auditorium. And I got to the end, I said, you know what? I got this. And they still came. Isn't that incredible? If somebody would have told me that, I'd say, you are out of your mind. Exposure. It's where people are. That's exciting.

Just this last year, I got to speak as a keynote to the second largest medical convention in the world. They bought more of my tapes and books than all the other eight keynotes put together. No one's turning me down because I come from the Bible, because of one reason. I'm going after realism, and I'm going after speaking to them so they can listen. And they're excited about it. They're a little confused when they walk out because they liked what I said. And yet it came from this book that they don't even know much about. And so God uses that to open up a lot of doors. Exposure says we've got to go where people are. Otherwise we're just talking to ourselves. But you can have all the exposure in the world and still be talking to yourself unless you have the second principle. And that's the principle of clear articulation, the principle of clear articulation.

What does the gospel look like? What does it sound like? You see, when you go to a foreign country, you go in there at least trying to understand the culture. Maybe you have to learn a language in order to talk to them. Otherwise you're just talking to yourself.

Last year I was in South Africa three times, and my first time in I had studied so hard to try to understand the culture and the scene there and especially the tension that's going on there. And I got up and I started telling people that I speak to hostile audiences, and nobody moved. They just sat there and looked at me. Nobody smiled, nobody grinned. Nothing. My first five minutes, I was just bombing in South Africa. After flying 35 hours, this is no place to bomb. Then I found out I hadn't really done enough homework. A hostile audience to them is a dormitory audience, a hostel. And so they say, Big deal. So you speak to dormitory audiences. Hostile means mean down there.

Next time I got a South African audience. I started out, I speak to hostile audiences, and they loved it. Why? Because I was talking to them, you see, and we use words like Christianese. We use words like this. We say, Let me share with you. If you think and the non-believers, the word is out. But when somebody says share, look out, they're going to get you. You need to accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior, huh? What does that mean? You need to ask Jesus to come into your life. What's that mean? We've got to be more carefully articulating the gospel, the people where they are. And as you see Jesus do it. It's incredible how he relates it to the people and to the situation. He doesn't say the same thing twice, and yet he's talking about the same gospel. He's relating it to people. He's not talking to himself. That's what I think is so exciting

and dynamic about his Ministry. He has nothing canned. He's going right after people. There's a dynamic there. Clearly articulating the gospel.

My first month in Newport Beach, a very infamous Playboy in the area called me up. He said, I understand you can fix marriages. I said, I can't fix them, but I can help them maybe a little bit. And he said, well, let's meet. I said, all right, meet me at the third booth to the left of the snack shop. He said, where? I said, Third booth to the left of the snack shop on Coast Highway. He said, Is that where your office? I said, yes, it's low overhead there and you don't have to pay a whole lot. He came in, he sat down. He just left his wife a week before her third baby was born to go live with a Secretary. Just a Claude. I've never seen a guy like this in my life. He said, how do you get a marriage together?

I said, well, there are four ingredients. And I knew he was very anti-everything, especially about God. And I said, the first one is you've got to go after the oneness factor. And then there's the responsibility factor, and then there's the intimacy factor, and then there's the supernatural factor. He said, what's that? I said, well, it takes a miracle to pull any marriage off these days. He said, Boy, I'll buy that. I'll buy that. So we moved into oneness factor. He said, when I think about this, I think I need that miracle you're talking about. I said, you need a double great a miracle for you, my friend. You're in trouble. He said, can we get that today? I said, not today.

You come back next week. Third booth, the left of the snack shop. We'll move on in this series. He came back and sat down. Third booth and left the snack shop and moved through his responsibility factor. He said, this is really good, but can we get to the miracle? I said, no, you're

not ready yet. Come back next week. He came back the third week and we got to the intimacy factor, and he said, we're going to get to the miracle today. I said, no, you're not ready yet.

You got to hear the whole thing. We got through with that. And he came back the next week and he said, before we order anything, I want to know something. Are we or are we not going to get to the miracle? I said, we're going to talk about the miracle. He said, then I'm going to stay wide open. Wide open. So he said, I feel guilty. I said, why do you feel guilty? He said, because I am guilty. Big move.

Sometimes it takes all day to move somebody from how they feel, to show them they really are guilty. He was intelligent, I was ecstatic. He said, do you have anything for my guilt? I said, I got four things for your guilt, but the first three don't work. He said, why are you telling me the first three? I said, because you're going to hear it everywhere else. You might as well hear it here, too. He said, okay, get going. I said, first of all, blame somebody. Blame anybody. Don't make a difference. Blame somebody, then you won't feel so bad. Blame your mother. I mean, it's amazing you come out all right. Blame your wife. She's been a real witch in this whole deal. Blame her, blame society. There's a big one. Blame them.

We got people blaming Kojack for things now. It's in blame somebody. But for goodness sake, don't take it on yourself. There's a corollary out that says in an office where a crisis has just taken place, if the boss is smiling during that crisis, he just figured out somebody to blame it on. I mean, it's in on television.

It comes on the public service announcement and it says there don't leave your keys in your car or you'll make a good boy go bad and you sit there and listen. And then guilt just comes over your body and you sit there and say, oh, I hope I never leave my keys in my car when really that good boy went bad all by himself. When he got in your car and took it, you just made it convenient for him, that's all. Blame somebody. He said, that won't work.

What's the next one? I said, the second one is you can move. He said, Move where, too? I said, how about Central Africa? He said, Central Africa. Why there? I said, do you know anybody there? He said, no. I said, then it'll work. You've got to go someplace where nobody knows you. Then you won't have the social guilt overwhelming your body every day. He said, that won't work. I went to Seattle for three days, sat in a motel, didn't see his boat for three days. He says, still feel bad.

I said, Well, let's move on to the next one. Maybe you can change the rule. Who made up the crazy rule? You got to stay with one woman, go with one this week, one next week, make up your own. He said, that won't work.

What is the answer? I said, well, fourth is what Christ was all about. What Christianity is all about? You see, the most basic problem inside, man, the most basic need you have, everybody has, is that we feel like we've got to pay for something when we do something wrong or if we don't do something right, we try to pay for it. It's part of our psyche. It's built in. We've got to pay for it.

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Many times when you get depressed, it's because you've done something wrong or haven't done something right according to your expectations. And you're beating yourself down on the inside. You're trying to pay for it.

People try to kill themselves constantly out there trying to kill themselves because they're trying to make an ultimate payment for what they did wrong. One of the largest fast food restaurant chains in this country, the head man sat down in my office falling apart. He said, you know, I'm going to take a gun and kill myself this next Wednesday because I really botched my life up. That's all he was saying. I'm going to go pay for it. I botched my life up, my wife's life up, my kid's life up. I botched my whole life. Now I'm going to go pay for it by shooting myself.

It's the most basic inner need. And I shared this with this man. I opened the whole thing up and said, hey, you need to understand, you got to have it paid for. You can't pay for it yourself. That's what Jesus came to do when he died on the cross to pay for the whole deal. So you don't pay anymore.

You see what I'm talking about? A clear articulation. I'm not saying take that illustration and only use that and put in a booklet. Stay away from boxes. But you've got to use something that relates to people where they are. Otherwise, you're talking to yourself, but you can have the best exposure and the clearest articulation and still be talking to yourself if you don't have the third principle.

The third principle is the principle of listening. The principle of listening. The principle of listening basically would go something like this. Tom Skinner, the black evangelist, came before a massive audience one time that I was involved in a group of ministers. He's a big dude. And when he talks, you listen, you nod, you say, [inaudible 00:24:55] he got up and he said, Christ is the answer. Right on, man. I mean, that's heavy. He said, I said, Christ is the answer. A few men said, hey, man. Hey, he stepped back away and he walked up that pulp and he said. I said, Christ is the answer. And the whole group went [inaudible 00:25:19].

He said, what's the question? He killed it. What is the question that Christ is the answer to? Because everybody out there has a different question to run to and fro with a bumper sticker that says, Christ is the answer is talking to nobody, because it's talking to everybody at the same time and everybody doesn't listen. Everybody out there, they don't listen at the same pace, the same way.

Everybody's got a question that Christ is the answer to. We've got to be listening for the questions and relate the answer of Christ to the question. Unless you think I made all this up, we better find a passage quickly. Colossians, chapter four. Colossians, chapter four.

Some of you get nervous. I could tell. I tell every audience. I've had seven years of Greek and three and a half years of Hebrew, and nobody cares out there. Nobody. But I'm excited that I can tell you. And you know that I can go down deep and stay down long and never come up for air. We'll try not to do that, though. Ephesians four. Excuse me, Colossians four. Or if you got the right kind of Bible, 311 Amen Yes, I don't know what it is in the other versions.

Look at verse three. Colossians four, verse three. Now watch this. Paul gives us a strategy here, and it's so exciting as he opens it up because he gives us an answer. He gives us an opening strategy for evangelism, praying, verse three, Colossians four, three. Praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the Word so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I've also been imprisoned. In order that I may make it clear in the way I have to speak, conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, non-believers, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with Grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person, as if each person demanded a different kind of response, not a different gospel, but a different kind of response related to the audience.

I mentioned, I think this morning in my seminar that one of the biggest tragedies we had in teaching or I had in teaching communications when I was teaching at Dallas Seminary was that most of the sermons that were being delivered in the classroom could have been delivered without an audience. They didn't need an audience. They just had beautiful pearls. They were opening up, but nobody cared. Listening is listening for the open door. And notice here praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us. A door. That God may open up to us the door.

There are two extremes in evangelism. One, extreme is when the door is open and you don't walk through. The other extreme is when the door is shut and you either pick the lock or knock it down. Both are wrong. Both are extremes. Either the door is open, you don't walk through or it's closed and you try to knock it down. You see, when God opens the door, it lasts forever. When

you open the door, it's got a built in sizzle to it. It doesn't last very long. When God opens the door, it lasts forever.

What's an open door? Is an open door your neighbor? Maybe, but not necessarily. Is an open door the person sitting next to you on the airplane? Maybe, but not necessarily. Is the open door the person that you work with? Maybe, but not necessarily. An open door, first of all, has to have some kind of response from that person to what you're all about. I don't mean that you've got a button on and they're really responding to that button necessarily, but they're, first of all responsive to you as a person. And then as you continue to talk with them, you find them even more responsive or you find a need in their life and you move in and try to help meet that need, maybe a death in the family. You go make a cake or do something and get over there and help them. You're looking for needs and you're moving to meet those needs. And as you do, you find the door opens farther and farther and God is involved in the deal. Now we've got something. We're working with eternal values.

Now we're working with eternal ingredients. Now it gets exciting. Right now when it's not exciting and downright scary is when you're trying to pick a lock and knock one down and you just Scoot it underneath the door and you're in the enemy territory. Don't know what in the world is going on, and you're getting beaten up all the time. That's not much fun. And besides, even if you close the deal, it didn't last very long because God wasn't involved.

Our neighbor on this side just waved at us for three years. We had an ice cream party for the whole block. He came he'd eat like this and just eat away and say, hey, how are you doing?

That's all I ever got over. We did not trot over there with our booklets to lead him to Christ. We didn't count that an open door. Our neighbor over here, right across the street. He didn't even wave for the first two years. Finally, he has begun to wave just a tad. It's getting very exciting to watch him open up. So I went and watched his son play baseball. Just a young little guy, good baseball player. I was so excited to see him and took my boy to watch him. I tell you, ever since we've done that, that guy won't quit talking over there. And the door is opening. The neighbor over here. Two months after we moved into our community there in Newport, this guy asked you on Saturday when we were out there working on the lawn. He said, I noticed you go to Church. Would you mind if we go to Church with you tomorrow? We call that an open door.

I moved in with my Mac truck, and I said, hey, you can ride in our car even. I mean, we'll figure something out. And so we got them all together, spent some time with them. The door was open. We were able to share with them. It was very exciting. Within a year after we made that initial contact and we're relating to them. One day he called me and he said, you probably noticed I haven't been around. I said, yeah, where have you been? He said, well, my dad just died suddenly. We don't really have a Minister. He said, you're the only person I know. It's even close to being kind of a Minister, and I can't figure out what you are, really. He said, would you do my dad's funeral? That's an open door. I'd never done a funeral before. I've successfully avoided all of that kind of thing. So I went and did it through that. He accepted Christ. His wife accepted Christ, his daughter accepted Christ, and one of the uncles accepted Christ.

When God opens the door, it lasts forever. When you open the door, it's got a built in sizzle to it. It doesn't last very long. Young man came to our counseling center and he said, do you live, give

religious experiences here? I said, no, sir, we do not believe in religious experiences. We like relationship with God, but we don't hand out any kind of religious experience here. He said, well, that's good. I don't even want to talk about God. I said, all right, you came to the right place. I'll talk with you. And so I usually don't do a lot of counseling, but I thought, this is going to be exciting. And so we began to meet and we made a deal. Nobody talked about God. We got to the 6th week, and I was able to help him during that time.

And I had him list out his goals in life. You know what his fifth goal in life was? I want a relationship with God. I moved through those first four or five very quickly and got to that one. And I said, hey, I thought we had a deal. Nobody's going to talk about God. He said, hey, I read your book. I know where you get your stuff. He said, I know if you can help me that way, if there is a God, I want to know if he's there. When God opens the door lasts forever. When you open it up, it's got a built in fizzle to it. It doesn't last very long. You got to be listening and praying that God will open up a door for us.

That God will open up a door for the word. A Jewish man. At least I thought he was Jewish. He came to a seminar, one of my first secular community wide seminars. He came he loved the seminar. As a matter of fact, it was up here at Granada Heights. It was the second seminar I'd ever done in the secular type of thing. We had it in a Church, and I was scared to death and nobody'd come except believers. But we packed the place out.

This guy came from Newport and sat right in the back row. He thought there would be 50 people there. And we packed it out and he had to sit in the back. And he's nationally recognized in a

couple of areas. And so he's cheese and he believes it. And so he was overwhelmed with the seminar. He loved it, loved the seminar. And then he called me up about a business matter and wanted to talk to me. So we went to lunch. Before we start our business, he said, hey, I've got a problem. I said, what's the problem? He said, you're doing all right, aren't you? I said, hey, I'm loving what I'm doing. Having a ball. Things are opening up. I'm really close to bumping heaven there. I mean, I'm having a great time. And he said, well, that's good. He said, I'm glad to see you successful because he said, I'm a successful kind of guy. And I said, I know you are. And he said, I got this national award. I said, I know you did. And so we kept talking this way, and he said, there's one thing bothers me. If you've got everything together, then why in the world do you slip God in your seminar right there in the middle of a seminar? He said, It didn't bother me that you did it. I wasn't offended, but it really bothered me that you felt the need that you had to stick God in there.

I tried to tell him I'm using his book as my material, and I felt like I'd at least give him credit for something. He didn't think that was too Swift. And so we kept talking, and I said, Are you Jewish? He said, well, kind of. I said, Wait a minute. Have you ever heard of anybody being kind of pregnant? He said, no. I said, then you aren't kind of Jewish. You either are or you aren't. He said, Well, I think I am. I said, now we've gone to kind of to think, are you? Aren't you? I said, yes. I said, I just want to know who I was talking to. And we started back in the covenants, back in the Old Testament. Started moving through. We talked for 3 hours. You know, at the end of the conversation, what he said. He said, you know, this is really Super Tim. I mean, I appreciate you going through this and I respect you for what you're all about. But he said, I don't have any need. I don't have a need for what you're talking about. Everything's going so Swift and cool out

there for me. I don't need this. I said, well, hey, if you don't have a need, you don't have a need. I mean, if you don't have a need, you don't have a need. He said, that's right. Can we meet next week about this business matter? I said, yes, let's do it.

So we came back the next week, same place. We began to talk and he said, you know, something's been bugging me all week. I said, what's that? He said, why on Earth do you feel like you need to stick God in the seminar? You have this perfectly good seminar and all of a sudden you stick God in there? He said, you're successful, aren't you? I said, yes, having a ball out there just loving. He said, why on Earth do you have to put God in there? I mean, it didn't offend me or anything, but why did you put him in there? We talked for three more hours. I didn't know, I knew that much. We got through with three more hours of conversation. You know what he said at the end? It was incredible. He said, you know, this is good for you, Tim. I can see that it's meant a lot to you, but he said, I don't have a need. I said, look, if you don't have a need, you don't have a need. I mean, if you don't have a need, you just don't have a need. He said, yeah.

We met the third week to finally get to our business deal. And he brought his wife this time. She was a Mormon background and we had an exciting time there and we started to talk our business and she said, Wait a minute, I got a problem. I said, what's your problem? I knew what the problem was. It was catching there in the home I could see. She said, we've been talking all the last couple of weeks. Why do you feel like you have to stick God and everything you do?

We went through three more hours of the whole thing. You know what he says? And it was unbelievable. He said, you know, for one guy to ask another guy for 9 hours about God and why he feels like he has to stick God in a seminar and in his business and everything else. I think the guy that's asking all the questions for 9 hours must have a need. I said, that's exactly what I've been thinking. When God opens the door, it lasts forever. When you open the door up, it's got a built in sizzle to it. And our job is to be praying that God will open up doors for the Word, that we might plant the seed and pour the water on and see God close the deal. That's exciting to me.

One of my last seminars, a medical doctor, 65 years old, walked right down the aisle up to me at a break. I just finished giving the gospel. He came up to me and he said, I see what you're doing. And tears were coming down his face. I said, what do you mean, you see what I'm doing? He said, I can see it. It's just as clear as can be. I said, what do you mean? He said, Well, I understand you're giving these people something that they really need on marriage and family and all that, and then you're slipping in there, something they've already rejected years ago, but you're making them think about it. And he said, I've never understood. I've never understood it before. I said, understood what? He said, I understand for the first time in my life that Jesus of Nazareth paid a payment for me when he died on the cross. I thought he just died for everybody in general, not for me. And he said, I accept that. I believe that. And he just was crying like a baby up there. Hey, when God opens the door, it lasts forever. When you open up a door, it doesn't last very long. It's got a built in fizzle to it.

In the last six months, I've seen some exciting things happen. One man is a general agent of a large insurance company in this country and doing quite well. He's Jewish, and I love to tell you

the Jewish stories because those are the difficult ones and God gets them all. He can do little ones and big ones, you see. And this guy had heard me and he couldn't understand how the Bible I stuck the Bible at the end just drove him nuts. And he said, this is incredible. I'm going to hear some more of your tapes. So he got curious and he picked up some tapes on Maximum Marriage and all kinds of stuff. He and his wife listened to them four times in a row. I mean, really went after it. While he was out jogging just this last fall, he finally was overwhelmed by God and got on his knees and accepted Jesus as his Messiah.

Just a month before that, a cancer surgeon in Pasadena was lured to go to a seminar. He came into the seminar and he didn't want to be there. And he got hooked into it. And he sat there and he began to like it. Didn't like it that he liked it, but he liked it. And during that seminar, he came to a realization that Jesus was his Messiah and he committed his life to him. Didn't tell a soul for three months. And then he came out of hiding.

Hey, when God is in the deal, it lasts forever. And I'll tell you what, it's the most exciting thing in the world to have God closed the deal. I used to close all kinds of deals. I'm one of the best deal closers you've ever seen in your life, but I don't know where they are today because I think a lot of times they had a built in fizzle to it. But you can have the best exposure and the clearest articulation and be listening very, very carefully and still be talking to yourself if you don't have the fourth ingredient or the fourth principle. And that's the principle of lifestyle.

Your life is speaking so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying. There are three principles I'd give here very quickly. One is we've got to be realistic. We've got to be realistic. We've got to be

down to the gut level and be real about the whole thing. Too many times we presented the idea that the Christian life is the abundant life and always on top of the pile or whatever.

How many have not been in a series in the morning? Would you raise your hand that I've been teaching? You've not been in the series. Well, let me share this. And you other people, you'll be fine, won't you?

There are two extremes in Christianity as I see it, and it bothers me a lot because just calm down. There are two extremes. One extreme is all of Christian life should be on top of the pile all the time. How you doing? Great. Hey, super. And you're dying on the inside, half dead. But we don't want to tell anybody. But always staying on top of the pile. Yeah. You're in with God. You're going to make it. I mean, you're going to go far. As long as you hang in there with God, you'll always be healthy, always be wise. Oh, my God. It goes on and on.

And then you move over here and this group has reacted against this group. And this group says all of life is underneath the pile. This is an exciting group. This group over here says it's getting bad out there. Bad. And it's true. It is getting bad out there, but you can still go and breathing just a few more days. Where this group is exciting people. This group is embalming everybody. And this group over here, they have a faces long enough to eat popcorn out of a milk bottle. You've seen them. I mean, these people, they'll get you right there. They'll kill you with a look. How are you doing? And they'll tell you right there, they'll tell you for sure every ache and pain ever hit them right there. You look for a face of joy, you won't find it here. I'm happy in Jesus. Yes, sir.

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Come with us to the next life, will you? We hope it'll be better. We're not sure. We hope so, man. It's been bad here. Hasn't been bad here.

Both of these are wrong because it's not realistic. It's not realistic that life is always on top of the pile. It's not realistic that life is always underneath the pile. That's foolishness. It's ignoring life as it is in people as they are. And if there's anything that excites me more than ever before about this book is that it's alive and it's powerful and it's true to life as it is and people as they are. And we don't have to wangle anything. You don't have to defend anything. You just need to unleash this live book to people and it overwhelms them because God is in the deal. Both of these are wrong, because life isn't just on top of the pile, not just underneath the pile. Life is full of piles. You may be on top of it. You may be underneath it. You may have to go around something. You may have to shovel a few. But you see the difference.

Listen, now you see the difference. The difference is this. Believers have the hope that they're going to get through the piles. Non-believers aren't sure we're going through the same kind of piles. We're going through the same kind of piles as a non-believer. And yet we try to cover it up. Oh, yes. We don't have any problems with our children because we built them on Christian principles. Yes, we have. We're so afraid to open up and be real. Some people say to me, I don't have anything in common with my nonbeliever friends. I used to be very gracious about all this. I try to be full of Grace and truth, but sometimes I go one way or the other. Now I've swung back. I'm getting very truthful all of a sudden and forgetting the Grace just a tad right here. I don't have anything in common with my nonbeliever friend. Nothing in common. I just love

somebody to say that to me because I just get ecstatic with asking them questions. I ask questions like this.

Are you married? Yeah, I'm married. Is he married? Yeah, he is. You got a house payment? Yeah, we sure do have one. Oh, yeah. It's really big. You got a car? Yeah. Got two of them. He got one? Yeah, he got a beat up, but he's got one. Do you ever Cook out at night? Yes. We like the barbecue. You think he does? Yeah. We were over there the other night. He does the same thing. Isn't that amazing? You ever go to the doctor? Yeah. You think he does? I suppose. I don't know. You can go on all night asking questions just to show the guy. You got just a little bit to talk about with this guy? Just a little. Not much.

We get this feeling that when Christians become Christians, all of a sudden we move into the other life. I can't get over some of these theological comments, like the deeper life, higher life. I love that. It's like we're not walking on the same ground. Weather up above it, out of step. I love these cartoons or else you're down there really deep and you can go down deep and stay down long and never come out to breathe and relate to people. It's incredible. We're unrealistic and our lifestyle must be real otherwise people don't listen. I love to hear somebody give a testimony or speak or sing and come up to them and say, hey, that was great. And the person say, hey, I didn't do it. God did. And I like to say, I could have sworn I saw your mouth move.

You see what I'm saying? We have a Christian Leadership Breakfast. We have a Christian Leadership Week in Newport Beach every year. This Christian Leadership Week brings in all kinds of nonbelievers, and we see many people come to Christ every year. It's so exciting to be a

part of. And yet two years ago, one of the heads of the breakfast had moved around and did a fantastic job. I mean, a fabulous job. And my Jewish friend was sitting at his table and I overheard the conversation. I shall never forget it. My Jewish friend said to him, we'll just call him John. You did a fabulous job. I mean, you really ran around and did some fantastic things to pull this breakfast off. And the guys today, I didn't do this. No, Sir, God did. And my Jewish friend so beautifully said, well, I was in your office when you were sweating out the speaker and you made ten calls one day right there in the office. I know you wrote some letters the next day. I remember the one time you almost got exhausted because you're up all night. He started moving through all these things. He said, I saw you do something Christian didn't know what to say. It's unrealistic to talk like that by faith.

Noah built a boat. I'm convinced that Noah got splinters. I'm convinced that Noah got hurt. I'm convinced that when he got through and even though they didn't know what the boat was, and they came by and said, what is that? Is it a boat? What's the boat? Well, the boat is going to float in the water when it rains. What's rain? Well, a lot of rain is going to come down a lot of water, and then we're going to need a boat to be in it. Well, no, I don't know what you're up to. I think you're crazy, but it's a good looking whatever it is. And I'll bet you anything Noah said, thank you. Thank you. I did do a good job there, didn't I? Noah built the boat, and if he hadn't built the boat, he'd have gurgled up with everybody else.

But do you understand? He did it by faith that that boat needed to be built in that period of time, just as God said he did. It enabled by God. He did it by faith. That's what God does. Adam built a boat. That's what man does. There's a balance there, and there is no man's work. Man's work isn't

any good unless it proceeds out of God's work, unless it's a response to what God has done. But it's realistic. Then it's got to be relational. The lifestyle has got to be relational. You see, in one, Thessalonians chapter two, it says, there, Paul comes across with some very interesting concepts.

Aristotle says that you have to have ethos or character, pathos or compassion and logos content, something to say. And Paul goes through and tells his approach to the Thessalonians. And the first few verses there, one, Thessalonians chapter two, he says, we came to you with pure speech. God examines our hearts. We were approved by God. He was saying we had ethos, we had character. We were coming with pure motives, not trying to heist you or to shaft you in any way. We were coming with pure motives. And then he says, we came with pathogens, with care, with compassion. We came as a nursing mother would tenderly care for her children or as a father would encourage an employer, his son dearly affection towards you. And he said, that's the way we came, with compassion. In verse 13, when you receive the largos, the content, the message, you received it as the word of God, not as the word of men, but as the supernatural word of God. Why? Because Paul approached them with character, with compassion, and he gave them the message in the process. You see, he didn't just dump a message on them. He gave them his whole life. It's got to be relational.

And thirdly, our relationship, our lifestyle has to be responsible. We've got to have a responsible lifestyle. So many times, the same idea of who lives the Christian life is overwhelming to people. Some people say that God lives and other people say that man does it all. As you move through, you see the balance so beautifully.

Like, for instance, with Lazarus. After Lazarus died, Jesus says, where have you laid him? Now? Jesus knew where they laid him. Jesus made the cave where they laid him. And they said, well, he's around the corner in a cave. They went around the corner of the cave and he said, roll away the stone. Jesus could have rolled away the stone. He could have said, stone roll, but he had them roll away the stone and they got in there in the tomb. And he said, now tell him to get up. No, he didn't. Jesus told him to get up. You know why? Because people don't tell dead people to get up and they get up. Only God tells dead people to get up and they get up. And so he said, Get up. Lazarus got up. Now he said, Take off the grave clothes. Any person who has the ability and the power to raise someone from the dead after behold how they think. It's incredible to me to understand why he couldn't dissolve the grave clothes in the process. But he didn't. Do you see the lesson?

Where to do the possible by faith that God will do the impossible. But our possible must be responsible. Where to do the possible by faith that God will do the impossible. When I speak, I speak with every kind of technique I know of psychology, of persuasion to keep you awake for about 45 minutes. My job is easy because my job just lasts for 45 minutes. I don't care what you say. When we're through with this particular time, I know you're going to enjoy it. I planned it that way. However, what I am concerned about is that there's another factor going on. While I'm speaking, I'm sweating like crazy to try to keep you awake and do my part just 45 minutes. By faith that God will change your life forever.

And so two years from now, three years from now, a year from now, that excites me. When I find out that someone took a principle that I was able to open up and they used it, and God used

it to change their life. Now I know God was in the deal. And that excites me to no end. You see the difference? It's not letting go and letting God. It's doing something responsible in our lifestyle.

Jewish family across the street moved in a week after we did. We were still in boxes. We asked them over for dinner. They came in the house. They said, Are you coming or going? Well, we just got here a week ago. A week ago. And you have us in tonight? Yes. We know that you have to find your pants. You end up eating at McDonald's or something like that. You might as well come home and have a good meal. So they were overwhelmed with that. We began to talk and have a great time relating to them. We never moved in trying to close a deal or anything like that.

We're just trying to build some kind of relationship found out they were Jewish. Then they saw that we did the Passover in our home every year in a fulfilled sense. That Jesus is the Passover. And we use a Hebrew, Christian, Hagatha, a Passover book. And so we go through the whole Passover with our children. And they hadn't gone through the Passover for years, ever since they were little children. Now they had children made them so jealous. They came over one day and said, could you show us how to do the Passover with our children? We've never done that before. So we taught them how to do the Passover in their Jewish home.

Then I got them into a temple because I felt like that they didn't even know they were Jewish yet. And I couldn't even talk to them until they got in there and understood. So I showed them where the temple was. We've had a great relationship that way. Never tried to close any deals. And all of a sudden a little girl on the street took my little girl. And they went down and talked to this

little Jewish girl and they said, hey, Christians are going to heaven. Jews are going to hell. You talk about warming up the block. They were looking for some kind of persecution. So the mother went to the temple the next night to their Jewish studies class. And I've been trying to get her to go there all along so we can discuss it weekly. She never would go, but she just had her weekly persecution. So she went to Sheriff.

She got in there, and before she went, she called my wife. She said, do you believe that the Christians are going to heaven and Jews are going to hell? My wife said, oh, no, we don't believe that. We believe that everybody is in the heap of trouble. And until they come into a relationship with God through the Messiah, Jesus, then they can have a relationship with God.

So if Jews and their Gentiles and everybody's in need of trouble, but you got to come through Jesus to get to God, well, it just Burns me up. That kind of thing can be said on the block. So she went to her Jewish studies class. She got before this massive group and she said, Let me tell you what happened this week. Just two nights ago, this little girl down the street came up and said to my little girl, Jews are going to hell. Christians are going to heaven. Can you believe that? And the Rabbi stood up. He said, If I were you, I would choose my friends more carefully because friends don't try to change you or convert you or make you non-Jewish friends will treat you and accept you just the way you are. That ticked her off.

She turned around, stood back up before the whole group, and she said, Let me tell you about my friends. My friends taught us how to have the Passover in our home. We'd never had it before. My friends got us into this crazy temple. My friends, every time we got problems, we go to them

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and they help us. They're concerned about us. When we had a problem in our family, they came over and they're trying to help us. They've given us books on parenting and all kinds of things. I'll tell you what, my friends have been there any time we needed them. They've been there. They have tried to change us. And that's more than I can say about people at the temple. You talk about a bomb in the temple.

And God used that time to open up this family like you cannot believe. Can you imagine if we tried to knock a door down in the last three years? What would have taken place? She'd had all the excuse in the world to sight against us and walk right out into eternity. And now God has opened up the door and we're opening up all kinds of conversation and sharing the gospel with them. When God opens the door, it lasts forever and it's so beautiful to be part of it. Evangelism, aren't we just talking to ourselves?

I was on the plane coming from New York back to Los Angeles. Businessman sat down with a three piece of suit. Looked like he was cheese of some company. I could tell this guy was big time, and I thought, this guy could be my next client. And sure enough, he was. He opened up for me to speak to 750 millionaires, multi-millionaires and their wives. About a year later. It's incredible. He sat down next to me and he said, what do you do? I said, I speak. He said, I know that, but what do you do for a living? I said, I speak for a living. I speak and people actually pay me. It's the most unbelievable thing I've ever seen in my life.

He said, that's really something. What do you speak on? I said, well, marriage and family and all kinds of things like that. He said, that's really interesting. Are you a psychiatrist? I said, no, got

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one that works for me, but I'm not one. He said, Are you a psychologist? I said, no, I got two of those, but I'm not one. He said, Are you a marriage counselor? I said, no, I got one that works for me, but I'm not one. He said, what are you then? Always hurts when they say it that way. What are you? And I bounced back and I said, I'm just a speaker. Just run around and speak, that's all.

Write a few books on the side. That's all I do. People pay me for it's the most unbelievable thing I've ever seen. He said, where do you get your stuff? I said, If I told you where I got my stuff, you'd sit someplace else, believe me. He said, come on, what do you get? I said, no. If I told you, you think I was trying to move in on yourself, I'm not going to tell you. He said, Come on. Where? I can handle it. What did you get it? I said, I get it in the book. He said, one book? I said, it's big, but yes, it's one book.

Well, get your pen out. And I had him get his pen out and he got his day timer. I said, Let me give you the title because it's unbelievable. I mean, when I first read, I didn't understand the thing in it, but then I figured out what it was all about. I mean, I'm having a ball finding new stuff all the time. He said, well, give me the title. I said, the title was Bible.

Now the guy says. He said, what do you say in your seminars on Bible? I said, Well, I talk a lot about sex. He said, you do? I figured out my audience because I saw him with a Playboy there in his briefcase, and I figured that's one subject he'd probably get pretty excited about. So he was up like this. It was all downhill from now on. He said, you mean in the Bible? I said, oh, yes.

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Some people think it says, Thou shalt not. It says, Thou shalt there and even goes one step further, thou shalt enjoy it when thou shalt. And so he said, that's incredible. I said, oh, yes. There's a verse in Deuteronomy 24: 5 that Moses wrote, let's say when a man marries a woman, he shouldn't work for a year, shouldn't be drafted into the army for a year, but he should cheer up his wife for a year. And in the Hebrew, that word cheer up doesn't mean tell jokes for a year. The guy pulled his pen back out. He said, what was that again? Deuteronomy 24:5. That's incredible in the Bible. Bible. And I told him about Song of Solomon and how there Solomon is, making love with his wife all the way through the book. Unbelievable book. He said, Song of what? I said, Solomon, can't you see the guy go to this Holiday Inn before the weekends out and pull out the Gideon Bible there? His business trip is shot.

I tell you this because I want to excite you about one thing, and I want you to hear it very clearly. This book is alive and powerful and pierces down to where people live. It's true to life as it is and people as they are. I don't care who they are, whether they're millionaires or paupers. It's true. And all it needs and all it demands is people who are willing to submit to God and go out and speak the truth in love into our world. Evangelism, aren't we just talking to ourselves? In a sense, I think we've been judging the world and talking to ourselves when we should have been judging ourselves and talking to the world.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your time this evening and Your Word. And Lord, I thank you because of the overwhelming aliveness and power of Your Word. The Father, I longed to see more and more people unleashing your powerful word, to relate to people where they are. Father, we know that you're adequate. We know that Jesus is the answer. And yet, Father, we

need wisdom in knowing how to apply this live and powerful word to our neighbors, to our friends, to our family. Father used this time this evening, we thank you again for the different seminars and the speakers on the campus. And we pray again that you might make us different people because we've been here, not because of the speakers, not because of the school, the sponsoring all of this week, but because you've met us here in a very special way. Through Your Word. Father, teach us balance out that which has not been clear or extreme clear up that which has been a little faulty and help us to remember exactly what you'd have us to remember and penetrate us with your word we thank you for the privilege of just assembling together around your word we pray that we might not be just hearers who dilute ourselves but we might be doers of your work we pray in Jesus the Messiah's name Amen.