

Three Important Elements in Evangelism

By Victor Beshir

Although I am sure you already know about these elements, however, the emphasis here is on EVANGELISM. The following is a guideline on how to apply them on your evangelistic activities. The more you learn about them, the more your mind will change until you acquire the mind of an evangelist, which is very essential to missionary work. An Evangelism mind prepares the evangelism heart, and when both are combined with a good spiritual life, they lead to amazing work in the fields of evangelism and missionary work. To the contrary, lacking these two is the reason for all the evangelism obstacles you see in some of your local churches. Now, you realize how important this topic is.

In this lesson I will provide you with points to think about, meditate on, talk to others about, and pray to God to instill in your heart and mind.

What Are the Three Important Elements?

1- Love:

- + The purpose of evangelism is to show the unlimited and unconditional love of God to all mankind, regardless of color, religion, age, ethnic background, or financial status.
- + It is important to know how much God loves each person in this world, no matter how evil, arrogant, or how resistant to the word of God.
- + God loves and wants not only the educated and clean, as He also came for the uneducated and unclean.
- + No matter how sinful a person is, God still loves him/her.

So, as a messenger of His Kingdom, show others the love of your Master, regardless their color, religion, age, ethnic background, sinfulness, or uncleanness.

- + Christ loves everyone, even the person who is homeless, jobless, lazy, unwise, or most defiled.
- + Every human being has some sort of weakness. I have some and you do too. Consider what you see in a person, no matter how dire the inadequacy, as a kind of weakness.

+ Unfortunately, sometimes we limit the Gospel teachings to the educated, the polite, and the polished ones. While Christ originally came to invite those we don't want to talk to.

+ Also, God does not limit his love to Copts, and his kingdom is not for Copts alone.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind" (Matt 13:47).

+ Christ came for the black as well as for the white; for the Muslims as well for the atheist; for people living in the desert as for those who live in modern homes.

+ If Christ loves all, then evangelism should be devoted to all, starting from those whom most people keep distant from, those in the bottom of the social scale: the rejects, the afflicted, the unknown, and the failed.

+ If Christ loves all sinners to the extent of entering the houses of sinners, and even inviting a criminal thief to go with Him to the paradise, so don't be ashamed to befriend those sinners when God appoints you to serve them. This though, should come after deep spiritual counseling with your spiritual father.

+ Of course each one of us has a call to serve in a certain area and probably to serve certain people, but **the golden rule in evangelism is to love all. Do not despise any group of people because of whichever reason, but be ready to serve all with love.**

+ This love will not be limited to those who welcome our service but should also extend to include those who hate us and persecute us. Here is where your love will be demonstrated in deep prayers for their salvation.

+ How about people who hurt us emotionally or even physically? Again, here comes the role of our prayers for them that will eventually heal our hurts and softens their hearts.

+ Love means you transform anger or jealousy into prayers, especially with those who are in the church

+ Love towards those who cause you heartbreak, harm, and all sorts of dissatisfaction, is manifested when you transform all these hurts into

deep prayers for their salvation. It is hard; however, it has its healing power to you and to the others.

2- Faith

+ Even though it is impossible to imagine that a criminal could become a good citizen of the Kingdom of God, or a sinner to come back to God, let me tell you that this is not the thought of Christ with whom nothing is impossible.

+ I met many parents who told me that it was too late and impossible for their children or for one of their children to come back to God. My answer has always been, no he/she will come back, just pray with faith. And indeed, I have often seen so many of these children come back, each has a wonderful story to tell. I can not tell you how many times my tears drowned my cheeks upon seeing some of these youth coming back to the bosom of the Father.

+ You need to have a faith that God is the master of the soul. No matter how bad the soul is, He has His own way of making it good again, to re-birth it once more.

+ To **work in evangelism is to trust in His work regardless of how tough the situation is or how bad the person.**

+ Having **faith that He will intervene at the right time.** Simply put, to get a soul back to God, He needs to treat this soul. The purpose of this treatment is to get the person to think, see and feel the right way, which sometime takes a long time. It could be years or months or days before you see changes in the person. God uses different ways, starting from gentle knocking on the human heart, to irritation, to afflictions, and even to closing all doors and obstructing all help. During these long, cold, and hard years of waiting, have faith in Him who is still at work, and spread this faith around in the hearts of those who love this person.

Once, a youth drifted from God's way and became a source of deep sadness to his parents. They talked to me and I told them to pray with faith. But for years nothing happened. Later on, the father told me in tears that his son is going to war, asking me to pray for his life. In my heart I felt that the salvation of this youth is coming closer. During the war, when the youth faced death, he changed to a new person. Now, this youth has a lot of love to God and others, and his life has changed drastically.

+ Sometimes, however, God sends in your way people who are ready to accept the gospel, just waiting for one word or one action, people are very thirsty and need a drop of eternal water. That's why we need, as evangelism workers, to have ears that can hear the unspoken words, eyes that can see the unseen broken hearts and senses that can feel the unnoticed hurts. How can we get those ears, eyes, and hearts? They are gifts from God to those who love serving others. So, the more you love people, the more God will shower you with gifts that help you to serve them better. To whom do you think God gives the gift of healing sickness and diseases? The answer is to those who are in total love and kindness of human beings. It happened that God allowed me, a sinner, to see and come closer to Pope Kyrillos VI. I saw many of his acts that brought me to tears because of the magnitude of his love. If you can imagine a person who can make you cry because of his love, then you can imagine Pope Kyrillos. The result was a gift of healing the sick that lasted not only during his life on earth but even after his departure from this world.

+ The **bottom line is I need to have faith in God's work even if I don't see results for years. Your work is preaching the Kingdom of God. His word will never come back empty.**

+ Therefore, I am not to worry about results of my evangelism or its fruits, because this is beyond my mission. I met a group of monks who were doing missionary work in the middle of the African Sahara. I asked them about the numbers of people they converted to Christianity. Their answer was that their great saintly spiritual father, who lived there for years, used to tell them that when he dies they will see people start coming to know Christ. And it happened. This spiritual father died (departed for a better expression) and we started hearing about multitudes of tens of thousands upon tens of thousands coming to Christ from this region. The conversion to Christianity there is still happening in an amazing rate. When I remember that I talked to them about thirty years ago and the fruits appeared just a few years ago, I conclude to the importance of faith in missionary work.

+ **Faith in His word:** Listening to the word of God will purify the person, **"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3)**

So, make sure to bring the word of God to all your evangelistic activities.

+ **Faith in the cross:**

The sign of the cross is power. Use it in your life and in your evangelistic efforts. Mark yourself, the people, and the place with the sign of the

cross. When using the sign of the cross, feel the power of the Holy Trinity whose name you utter with this sign. Also, recognize the power of the cross. A Combined faith in the power of the Holy trinity and the power of the sign of the cross will help you greatly in your life.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1Cor 1:18)

+ Faith in the power of prayers:

You all know the power of prayers. Briefly, prayers can do anything when we pray with faith. So, pray for others with faith, knowing that God hears you and will act. **Pray with faith for the people you evangelize, knowing that God will work in their hearts and lives.**

+ When God sends you to a place to serve, have faith that He will work greatly through you. He will invite people. He will open the hearts. He will work in them for salvation. No matter how people look cold after your message or even look careless, have faith that who sent you will do the work.

+ In many cases we become concerned about what to say or what to do in evangelism or service. However, the Lord commands us not to worry but trust in Him Who will speak in us.

+ With this kind of faith, the apostles entered big cities realizing by faith that there were people waiting for the message of life. The Holy Spirit worked through them and converted thousands in each city.

+ Faith in the power of the altar:

The altar is the office where we put all our supplications for Him to act on. The altar carries the body and blood of our Savior. Therefore, putting a request on the altar during the Divine Liturgy is a very powerful way to get help in our mission.

+ Behind great faith there is always a life of prayer:

When we pray, we trust that we will get responses for our supplications for others. We know that we left them at His hands and He will take care of them, sooner or later, in one minute or in 30 years. The bottom line is we don't just pray, but pray with faith in His work for the best for the person at the right time.

+ How Do We Acquire Faith?

Faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5: 22). However, for a person to be of a great faith, he/she needs to be ready to face trials in life in order to

strengthen this faith. You need to experience faith in your life first before you can trust it to work in others. This is why behind great persons of faith there are lots of trials in their lives. To learn to depend on God alone without relying on money, knowledge, authority, friends, family, intelligence, or personal skills and gifts, a person needs many trials, as the Bible says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4)

+ Trials are not fearful as you may think because they come from His merciful hands to train you on how to hold on to Him alone. Think of a swimming trainer who asks you to throw yourself into the water, while he is always close to you to help you and train you on the different aspects of swimming. God works in a similar way, He sends the trials to teach us while He stands by to guide and to intervene at the right moment.

3- Hope

+ Hope works hand in hand with faith. You have faith that God could work and you have hope He will work no matter the situations and difficulties. Faith answers the question: Can God do it? Hope answers the questions: Will He do it?

This takes us back to the Wedding at Cana of Galilee. When St. Mary told Jesus that the people have no wine, His answer was "My hour has not yet come." (John 2: 4) However, St. Mary asked the servants "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5). Here is faith that He can do and hope that He will do despite the fact that His hour has not come yet.

He will do no matter how late.

He will be glorified no matter how deep the suffering.

A quick look at the days of the apostle when the Jews murdered St. Stephen and Christians left Jerusalem. And a quick analysis of these circumstances would have concluded to say that Christianity is on its way to perish. But, hope would say no, just let the Master complete His work. Amazingly in a few decades Christianity reached the entire known world at that time.

Another example, examine the great persecution of the ten Roman Emperors, such as Nero, where millions of Christians were martyred. Who would have believed that the blood of the martyrs would defeat the Roman sword? In the middle of this severe persecution Tertullian said his famous words, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of faith."

Another example is the Soviet Union. While the government closed churches and monasteries, killed around 52,000 priests and monks, and taught atheism in schools and universities, God was working through the underground church to keep the yeast of faith. It took God over sixty years to tumble the Soviet Union and to make faith known again. Here is a case of strong hope.

So, no matter how bad the situation or the circumstances have faith and hope.

To come to conclusion, love, faith, and hope are so important in the missionary's life. They are fruits and gifts from the Holy Spirit that are watered by a life of prayers, and strengthened through trials.

Question:

Please give some examples of love, faith, and hope from the life of the prophets or the apostles.