

## Evangelism as an Invitation to Dance

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

**August 22, 2004:** "Evangelism as an Invitation to Dance" by Shane Fuller, Pastor of Singles Ministries of College Park Church. Preaching from Acts 10:1 through 11:18, Pastor Shane challenged us to think and act outside our "bowls" and "boxes" as we consider our role in reaching others for Christ. During his message, Pastor Shane pointed out that God is at work in the lives of non-believers, as well as believers, in a divine dance in which we can participate, for "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." Ecc 3:11 (NIV)

Pastor Shane described how people often view evangelicals as being pushy and aggressive, stepping on others' toes and not being very effective witnessing for Christ. Perhaps we need to be more like Christ in reaching out to others as participants in a divine dance with the Holy Spirit as he works in the lives of all people, believers and non-believers alike.

**Application Questions:** *As we expand our thinking and realize more fully that God is at work in both the lives of non-believers and believers as well, how might this effect the way we relate with non-believers? How might this effect the way we share our faith?*

In Matthew 28:19a we learn that when Jesus gave his great commission to his disciples, before he ascended into heaven, it was to "make disciples of all nations." Luke records in Acts that, before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples that they, empowered by the Holy Spirit, were to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:4-8.

Although Peter had followed Jesus for 3.5 years, sat under his teaching, witnessed all the events that took place, and filled with the Spirit preached mightily to the Jewish people and performed miraculous signs and wonders, he had not yet caught the vision of reaching the gentile world for Christ. Even though he was powerfully used of God in proclaiming the gospel to the Jewish people in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, in a sense, he had placed a bowl [or basket] over his light to the world (as described in Matthew 5:14-16). So God expanded Peter's vision through an interaction with Cornelius in the town of Caesarea.

As we reflect on the passage of scripture in Acts 10 through 11:18, we find that Cornelius was a Roman Centurion from Caesarea and that He and his family were Gentiles (Acts 10:28) who were devout and God-fearing, gave generously to those in need, prayed to God regularly, and were respected by the Jewish people. But there was something missing.

**Application Questions:** *What was missing in the life of Cornelius and his family? Do you know people who are in a similar situation today? Would you characterize them as believers or non-believers? Describe their life and faith?*

We also know from what Luke records earlier in Acts, that Peter was a highly effective and highly sought out leader of the early church, but there was something missing at this point in his ministry.

**Application Question:** *What was missing in Peter's vision as to whom God wanted he and the other apostles to reach? By way of application, what is your vision as to whom God wants you to reach for Christ?" Is there anything missing, given Christ's expressed desire (command) that we make disciples of all the people of the world?*

As Pastor Shane pointed out, this story has some similarities and differences to what took place many years ago in the city of Joppa when Jonah was called by God to be his messenger. (For a map of the region, visit <http://www.ntimages.com/Israel-i-map.htm>). Both Jonah and Peter were asked of God to be his messenger, however, Jonah fled and Peter obeyed.

As the Lord led Cornelius and Peter to come together, Peter was given the words to speak to bring Cornelius and his family and friends to believe in Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Application Questions:** *What was Peter's opening question as he began to interact with Cornelius and the large crowd that had gathered in his home? How could we apply this to our approach in sharing Christ with others? How might we use this approach in providing counsel to those seeking help and advice when confronted with difficult situations of life?*

*At what point in Peter's response did the Holy Spirit come upon the people? At what point might the Holy Spirit do likewise as you interact with non-believers who don't know Christ. How about believers who are struggling in their relationships with others? At what point might the Holy Spirit illuminate their hearts and minds as to God's will for their lives?*

*Are you, or do you know of someone who is, like Cornelius, but has not yet "connected the dots" and come to know Christ as their personal Savior? How might we pray for God to work in their lives? How might we pray for God to work in your life as a messenger of God, like Peter, in being a light in the world and bringing others to Christ?*

*How about believers who are in need of God's direction in their lives? How might we pray for their needs, and yours as well as you seek God's direction in being a light unto them?*

*What might you, or we as a flock group, do in helping College Park reach out locally and/or overseas to people groups around the world who do not yet know Christ?*

*As you arise each morning ask "What are you doing today Lord, and how can I help?" I make myself available to you. Use me as you wish.*

**Spiritual Discipline:** Today, Pastor Eric Anderson called to our attention the spiritual discipline of fasting, and encouraged us to consider it more than fasting from food for a time, but fasting from anything that we feel might be getting in our way of a closer walk with the Lord. As we deny self and get to know God better, perhaps we might take some time this week to fast for a period of time and refrain from selfish desires of...

- Eating so much food, watching so much TV, or spending so much time on the computer,
- Being so involved in activities...kinda like being in an activity trap, or if retired,
- Sleeping away the day, pursuing leisure activities, or shopping till you drop, etc.

...and get to know God better by spending the time in reading, memorizing, and meditating on God's word and praying as the Holy Spirit directs your heart.