

Growth Points

with Dr. Gary L. McIntosh

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Where Are All The Amateurs?

Given the fact that amateur evangelists bring most people to Christ, why are there so few people evangelizing the world? If amateurs can lead people to Christ, why aren't we seeing more people find Christ?

There are many reasons that could be mentioned, but a key insight is that Christians have lost the "will" and "skill" to tell their friends about Christ!

We've lost the "will" to share Christ because we've disconnected ourselves from people who are lost. In a zealous desire to separate from non-

Christian attitudes and philosophies, most Christians separate themselves from their lost friends and family members. They no longer have the will or desire to become involved in the lives of non-Christians.

We've done the opposite of what Christ expected from us as He prayed, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one; . . . As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:15-18). While we reject non-Christian philosophies, we must accept non-Christian people. Acceptance is not approval. It is just becoming involved with lost people.

The other half of the problem is we've lost the "skill" to build friendships that result in our sharing the love of Christ verbally. We may be the nicest, sweetest, most loving people and still not connect with people about their need for Christ! We should be nice. Yes, we are to be loving. But, we need to operate with the indisputable core conviction that lives are changed **only** when the gospel of Jesus Christ is communicated through words! Scripture reminds,

"for 'Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they

have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:13-15)

It is at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow and worship. Good deeds and loving kindness find their fulfillment in Christ, and without Him, they are only hollow works.

Think back on your own life. While you may have been influenced by the love and care shown by Christians, most likely someone eventually took the time to explain the gospel message in an understandable manner to you. Loving people is important, and often comes first, but eventually we need to tell people about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sharing the Story of Christ

"To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Savior, and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church."

—William Temple

"God is in the people-saving business, and His method is to use His people."

—David Siegmann

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I'm Not A Talker!

Listen to their story, tell your story and the story of Jesus.

Isn't it amazing that we find no difficulty in talking to others about the weather, the news, school, work, kids, parents, spouses, politics and money, and then can't figure out how to lovingly talk about Christ. Of course some will say, "I'm not much of a talker, so I just show the love of Christ with my life". Of the hundreds of people I've known, very few could be considered exceptionally good communicators. The job of the amateur evangelist is simply to tell their own story.

When a person receives Christ as Savior, they know everything necessary to tell others about Christ. They know that they are sinners and are guilty of rebellion against a holy God. They know that their sin has earned them a sentence of death—eternal separation from God. They also know that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for their sin and offers forgiveness as a free gift. They know that they don't deserve His forgiveness but by grace and faith can receive it. Amateur evangelists know a lot. Most importantly they know one real life story—their own!

Recently, a friend of mine took his family to Disneyland. They had the opportunity, after waiting in line for an hour and a half, to ride the Indiana Jones ride. During the following week they shared with others about how much fun the ride was, about the special effects, and the sensations. Why is it, that nobody questioned their qualifications for reviewing the ride? They had only ridden on it once and it had only been a day or two since the ride. After pondering the ride for a week or two the possibility existed that they might change their minds. Perhaps they might come to realize that it wasn't really fun, but in reality just an illusion and wishful thinking. How absurd! Nobody reasons like that, except when it comes to personal experiences with Christ.

My friend, John, tells his story this way. "I distinctly remember the first time I shared my faith with an unbeliever. I was five or six years old and sitting with a friend in his back yard. We somehow got into a conversation about church. Our family went to church and his family didn't. My friend was interested in why we went to church, apparently it seemed a bit odd to him.

While we were talking, I noticed his little dog across the yard drinking water. I said something like, "Do you see your dog over there? He's thirsty. He needs water to live. Just like your dog needs water to live, we need Jesus to live spiritually. Everybody sins. Everybody. The Bible says that because we sin, we deserve to die and go to Hell. Jesus died on the cross for you and me so we don't have to die and go to Hell. All we need to do is just believe Him. We need Jesus like your dog needs water to live."

Many years later, John and his wife Mary got to listen in to a similar situation among their children. They were driving home one night after church. Their oldest son was about 5 or 6 years old, and the middle child was about 3 years old. They listened as the older son shared the plan of salvation to the middle child with much more eloquence than they ever could have dreamed possible. That night their middle child received Christ, led to Him by his slightly older brother.

Why is it that the older we get, the more we are prone to making things difficult? If we go through a heart operation, it doesn't mean we can operate on someone else. But if we have been saved, we can lead someone to Christ! We may not know all of the answers, but we know enough to effectively tell our story.



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