

Evangelism--It's Not Just a Job. It's a Passion

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Good Afternoon:

I am John Black, from San Antonio and my assistant is Heath Conaway, my Son-in-law, from Mansfield, TX. As you take a seat, there should *be two sheets on your chair*. One is *a critic sheet and the other an outline sheet*. If you do not have these sheets, raise your hand and Heath will ensure you receive them. I ask you all *please wait until the end of this workshop to fill out your critic sheet*. Thanks for being thoughtful of those around you.

Before we jump into this session, everyone please *bow your head and close your eyes*. Keep them closed for me: I know that most of you have asked Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior. But, while every eye remains closed, would you to please slip your hand up for a second if, *you are still only considering that decision?* Thank you.

Let's Pray: Father, I pray that these men *not focus on this insignificant messenger, but rather on the significant message you have placed on his heart to deliver*. I pray that each of us *will leave at the door*, our pride, stubbornness, ego, self-centeredness or any other sin-nature *that would hinder your Holy Spirit* from working in us, through us, as us. Father, I pray each of us will leave this workshop *craving a more intimate relationship with you*; one that will *grow in us a true passion for evangelism*. My Lord, I pray that you *will be pleased, honored, and glorified* in what is said and done during this workshop. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen and Amen.

It is an honor for Heath and me to host this workshop. That said, *I apologize if you are here with the expectations of me teaching you how to become passionate over evangelism*. I am not qualified.

God simply brought me before you to *share my life's story*. You may certainly take notes if you wish, however, *I encourage you to just listen*. I believe that *the only notes you need to take, and instructions you need to follow*, are the ones the Holy Spirit lays on your heart in your quiet time with him.

As I'm sharing with you what the Holy Spirit has laid on my heart, *be listening to see if you can relate to parts of it*. Lord willing, *all of us* will look to Him *to become passionate* for *doing evangelism*.

Before I begin my story, *let's ensure everyone here knows what evangelism entails*.

1) What Evangelism Entails

- a. [Matt. 4:19](#) - Jesus invites us to -- Follow Him, and He will make us fishers of men.
- b. [Matt. 9:37](#) - Jesus explains to us - The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
- c. [Matt. 10:16](#) – Jesus warns us – He will send us forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: so we need to be therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
- d. [Matt. 28:19](#) - Jesus commands us to - Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- e. [Mark 16:15](#) Jesus again orders us to - Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
- f. [Luke 24:47](#) Jesus tells us - Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.
- g. [John 15:16](#) Jesus directs us to - Go and bring forth fruit.

- h. [Acts 26:18](#) says we are - to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Wow! Evangelism *is A Pretty Intense Job* that God has placed on you and me – Amen? This then, begs the question, “If we, Christians, have read these verses, and understand the importance of doing evangelism, *why aren't we all passionate about doing it?*” I believe the answer may be found listening to my story.

Here we go with:

2) My Story—Part One

I'm a retired Marine with 30 years of service; from 1972 - 2003.

At the age of 20, I was happily married to my high school sweetheart. I enjoyed my good-paying construction job.

I also was a home owner.

I led singing in a startup church (a local mission).

I even joined my pastor every Thursday evening in doing visitation in our church community. I was very content in my life.

You can imagine then, how thrilled I was to learn that *“Uncle Sam”* was looking for me to, *“Answer the call of service to my country.* I *did not want to serve* in the Marines, or in any other service branch for that matter, because the Vietnam War was going on at the time.

I didn't want to give up my *safe, comfortable, lifestyle for the dangerous uncertainties of combat.* But like it or not - I was drafted into service by my Commander-in-Chief in October, 1972.

That December, *I completed basic training* to claim the title, Marine - OOH RAW! Yes, *I was proud to be in the Corps.* But, just because I liked being a Marine, didn't mean that I was *passionate* about carrying out my duties and responsibilities.

In fact, *I grumbled and complained* about our training being *even harder after boot camp.* I was convinced that my reasons for having a bad attitude toward military authority were justified!

Regardless of my REASONS for having a bad attitude back then, *God was patiently at work in my life.*

Amidst the turmoil and strife of war, God used a *108-year-old refugee* to begin a change in me. Looking back, I believe that *God was preparing me* for my eventual *call-to-service for Him, to do evangelism.*

In the summer of 1975, the country of South Vietnam fell to communist North Vietnam. It resulted in hundreds-of-thousands of its people being received into our country as refugees. Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, CA, established a temporary refugee camp, within its boundaries, to house many of them.

I was a military news reporter, working in that camp. One article I wrote was on the life of a 108-year-old refugee.

This fragile, 75-lb, white-haired woman lay on her military cot as her grandson interpreted her life's story to me. She said she was born in China, FREE. However, communism enslaved her nation while she was a child. So She, along with her parents, escaped communism to begin a new life in Vietnam; FREE.

“But in time,” she said, “Vietnam split into two countries, with communism overtaking the northern half, where we lived. For the second time in my life, I was forced to leave my home, to escape communism. I fled to what became, South Vietnam. Once again I was FREE.”

“Sadly,” she recounted, “Communist once again overran my country. So, with only the close on my back, I fled my war-torn country, hoping someone would rescue me. And it was some of you Marines that did just that.”

And with a smile on her weathered face, and tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, she exclaimed, “You people cared enough about me to fight for me, and rescue me, from a terrible evil.

You have blessed me with a priceless gift for which I am eternally grateful. You made it possible for me to leave this world the same way I arrived in it; FREE.”

Since that moment, in 1975, my attitude and understanding about the Corps changed forever. And so did my understanding about what part I wanted to play as a Marine. Now I was motivated to learn more about my Marine Corps. The more I studied and learned about my Corps' history, the more I appreciated being a part of it.

Soon, my love of the Corps grew into a passion. No longer did I dread or question the duties and responsibilities placed on me by my superiors. I fully understood the need for training and preparation in order for us to successfully carry out our global mission.

Let me close Part One of my Story with these conclusions:

3) Conclusions on Part One:

- a. I love being an American, with its entitlements, but I don't want to “SERVE” her when asked to help others in need
- b. I grumble and complain when military leaders give me an assigned task
- c. I have a rebellious spirit toward man's authority
- d. I, at times, am unconcerned about the welfare of others placed under my responsibility by my officers
- e. I don't understand that Marines are the vanguards, leading the advance, against global evil

Now here's, 'The Rest of My Story.'

4) My Story--Part Two:

In October, 1986, thirty years since becoming a Christian, I was sitting at my kitchen table, smoking a cigarette and drinking my coffee. My wife had left for work and our children were off to school. I had the day off from work, so I was just enjoying my, "QUIET TIME!"

My Christian life, to that point in 1986, easily paralleled my conclusions to Part One of My Story. Let's look:

5) Conclusions on My Story up to this point

- a. I loved being a Christian, with its entitlements, but I didn't want to "SERVE" God when asked to share his Son with lost souls
- b. I grumbled and complained when God gave me an assigned task
- c. I had a rebellious spirit toward God's authority
- d. I, at times, was unconcerned about the spiritual welfare of others God had placed on my heart, and . . .
- e. I didn't understand that evangelists were the vanguards, leading the advance, against spiritual evil throughout the world.

Then, in an instant on that October morning, God had me off of my chair and on my knees! My head was bowed to the floor and my eyes were closed tight. I trembled in fear because I realized I was in His presence. I experienced a preview of what it means in God's Word, where He forewarns, "Every knee shall bow and tongue confess . . ." That is exactly what happened with me. I first confessed to God that I had the wrong attitude about my call to service for Him.

My attitude had four areas in need of immediately change:

The first area needing change was my Ego or Pride – There's no way I'm doing that. . . I'm my own man! I just have to do two things: 'pay taxes and die!' I do what I want, when I want, and not before! If people want to learn about God, they should come to church like the rest of us.

Second, was my laziness – I do enough other Christian stuff. I am just too tired. There are plenty of other people to do. . . whatever.

The third area needing change was my lack of discipline -- I don't have time read my Bible; let alone, memorize scripture, meditate on it, and the rest of that stuff. I keep meaning to but, other things come up.

And the fourth area needing change was fear -- I'm too shy and bashful! People might get mad at me. They might make fun of me! I'm not good enough. I might fail. There are others who can do it better.

After I confessed, and apologized, to Him for my bad attitude, God immediately revealed to me the REAL REASON why I didn't have a passion for obeying His commands. I began weeping uncontrollably before Him as I apologized for never having made Him--MY FIRST LOVE!

However, I praise God that since that moment, in 1986, my attitude and understanding about God has changed forever. And so has my understanding about what part I choose to play as a Christian.

The more I learn about my Heavenly Father, through our growing, *intimate relationship*, the more I appreciate being part of His family.

Soon, my love of God grew into a passion. No longer do I dread or question the duties and responsibilities God places on me. I fully understand the need for training and preparation in order for all we Christians to successful carry out the Great Commission.

That ends my story. I thank you for allowing me to share it with you. Are there any questions or comments you have for me? (Field any questions / comments – keeping watch on time)

If there *are none . . .* . If there *are no further . . .* then, at this time, I would like try my brand new, never before been attempted experiment. Is that okay with you?

We'll call it, The Hug Experiment.

6) The Hug Experiment
a. Story of Scotland mission trip

As we wrap up, I offer you one book for recommended reading
On this subject.

It is, "Concentric Circles of Concern" by W. Oscar Thompson, Jr
It helps us understand that if our "vertical" relationship isn't intact, it's impossible for our
"horizontal" relationships to be working correctly.

The Fisherless Fishermen

"Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'" ([Matthew 4:19](#))

There was a group called "Fishermen's Fellowship". They were surrounded by streams and lakes full of hungry fish. They met regularly to discuss the call to fish, the abundance of fish and the thrill of catching fish. They got excited about fishing.

Someone suggested they needed a philosophy of fishing. So they carefully defined and redefined fishing and the purpose of fishing. They developed fishing strategies and tactics.

Then they realized they had been going at it backwards. They had approached fishing from the point of the fisherman and not from the point of view of the fish. How do fish view the world? How does the fisherman appear to the fish? What do fish eat and when? These are all good things to know.

So they began research studies and attended conferences on fishing. Some traveled faraway to study different kinds of fish with different habits. Some got Ph.D.'s in Fishology. But none had yet gone fishing.

So a committee was formed to send out fishermen. As prospective fishing places outnumbered the fishermen, the committee needed to determine priorities. A priority list of fishing places was posted on bulletin boards in all the Fellowship halls.

Still no one was fishing. A survey was launched to find out why. Most did not answer the questionnaire but from those who did respond, it was discovered that some felt called to study fish, a few to furnish fishing equipment and several to go around encouraging fishermen.

What with meetings, conferences and seminars, others simply didn't have time to fish.

Jake was a newcomer to the "Fishermen's Fellowship". After one stirring meeting of the "Fellowship," Jake went fishing. He tried a few things, got the hang of it and caught a choice fish. At the next meeting he told his story, was honored for his catch and was then scheduled to speak at all the "Fellowship" chapters to tell how he did it.

Soon he began to feel restless and empty. He longed to feel the tug on the line once again. He cut the speaking, resigned from the Board and said to a friend, "Let's go fishing." They did-just the two of them-and they caught fish.

The members of the "Fishermen's Fellowship" were many, the fish were plentiful, but the fishers were few.

QUESTION: When was the last time you and I did some serious fishing for men? What are we waiting for? After all, Jesus did say, "*Come, follow me... and I will make you fishers of men.*"

Facts of the Matter: Daily Devotionals.