

After our Charity Sale and meeting the public, I thought we would remind ourselves of several principles about **effective evangelising**. Ie, to remind ourselves of **how God** works in the hearts of those who come to faith in Him and how **we** ought to be a **means** of being a blessing to those around us as we try and witness to them.

10 PRINCIPLES to REMEMBER – LEST WE BECOME DISCOURAGED

(1) Remember conversion is a **process** – it normally does **not** happen through **one** event or conversation alone! It is a **culmination** of experiences. Sudden, unexpected conversions are not the ‘norm’! In fact, they are not sudden anyway – even Paul’s conversion was **gradual!** *it is hard for you to kick against the goads* [Acts 26:14]! Did Paul or anyone else **think** at the time that he was kicking against God as he slaughtered Xns? As we encourage people to turn to the Lord, don’t try and cover **all aspects** of the faith at one sitting! One point at a time. Over a period of time the **light dawns** – as indeed in nature! Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a farmer planting seed, clear away the rubble first, prepare the ground, sow, water, cultivate the growth - all **before** reaping the harvest! (It can be easy to throw seed on unprepared ground and get something that **looks like** fruit but actually is **not**, as the parable says). So do not be discouraged if ‘newcomers’ are slow in grasping some important doctrines – true faith is a gradual process of convictions!

(2) It is **best** to ‘witness’ when we are under **their agenda!** Eg X in Levi’s house at a **social occasion** - a feast at which there was a **large company of tax collectors and others** [Luke 5:27-35] We see how Levi’s **hospitality** in inviting Jesus to that special dinner resulted in an important discussion about Jesus’ **role** in the world. Jesus had occasion to say, in **replying to their** question *I have not come to call*

the righteous but sinners to repentance [30]. Jesus was primarily concerned with those who were bad not good! He came to **heal** not condemn! We should be the same. – it was when **they asked** Jesus a question that He took the initiative and explained some things. *Why do you eat and drink with....* The benefits of witnessing under **their agenda** are (a) their **guards** are down, whereas if we go in with ‘all guns blazing’ they will be on the defensive. (b) they are **confused** and **want** an answer! People, especially today, **are** looking for answers to their problems! (c) they cannot charge us with ‘Bible thumping because **they** asked us a question. Thus we need to be **prepared** when they do ask us! It is important that we are **confident** about our faith/beliefs - **don’t be apologetic!** Many people are looking for solid truth and are attracted to something absolute/final.

(3) Evangelism is a **lifestyle** not something we turn on and off at certain times when certain people are around. It is a **way of life** – our lives should **appeal** and be attractive to unbelievers - not just because you go to church on Sundays - but because of the many other principles you hold throughout the week! There are actually plenty of opportunities **each day** for you/I to live out our faith. Read that Xian book at lunch-break instead of the newspapers! Put on that Xn tape in the car (as you would normally). Tell **Kevin Pirie** worker story! *Be **natural** be true to yourself and tell the whole truth – story meeting ‘Xn’ in Inverness street!! I would never have said what I did say if I knew he was not a Xian – why not? People will not be offended at **you** telling the truth about your inward thoughts.

(4) Don’t forget it is the **Holy Spirit** that changes a person’s heart – it is **not our business** to ‘convert’ anyone – we can’t anyway – let God deal with people’s heart/souls! Our duty is to **confirm** the **reality** of Christ/salvation and to **inform** people of the truth, and if we can, **explain** the truth. *Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you* [1 Peter 3:15].

(5) Avoid **judging** and **condemning** people. Jesus said **Judge not** and He meant it! Remember the MacAuley ladies and Sunday newspaper man! Say ‘No thank you, I don’t smoke’ rather than ‘The Bible is against smoking, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and must not be polluted’! **Behaviour** can one of the best testimonies – teacher across the road running out to explain her sore back in the pews! Jesus and Woman of Samaria, He could have said so much by way of condemning - the disciples were quick to **marvel** at X speaking to **that type** of woman! Teaching comes **after** commitment

(6) Remember **acceptance** of someone does **not** mean **approval** of that person’s behaviour. To be nice to someone does not mean we compromise with their sins! Jesus accepted sinners **as they were!** Every person has the image of God in them, despite the corruption and perversion of that image, there is still the faint reflection of God in every person. All classes of **people** are to be ‘respected’ - even the tramp in the gutter! To be mannerly and kind to someone does not mean we **agree** with their either their life or their beliefs! Isn’t that the whole point of Jesus parable of the **Good Samaritan**? When we show **respect**, we will be listened to. We must not look down those coming out of the Bingo hall, as if we, by **nature**, were better than them! By **grace** – *who makes you to differ?*”! God’s mercy!

(7) Very often, it is **we, us**, not the unbeliever, who ought to **change** our habit. Paul said ***I became a Jew... I became weak...I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some*** [22]. He shaved his head, in order to get a hearing! Of course in ‘ibecoming’, we do not commit **sin**) but we can change our **customs** or even **traditions** in order to ‘accommodate’ and encourage an unbeliever to talk of religion and faith in Christ. To stop repairing a neighbour’s burst pipe to go to the prayer meeting may be a very bad witness! *To expect unbelievers to change their dress or programme in order to worship ‘our style’, is not what Paul teaches here.

(8) **When** we **do** ‘mix’ with many unbelievers, it is **vital** that our contact is **edifying**. So many Xns, **forget** the whole business of being Salt and Light when they are with the world! Our language must be wholesome and the subjects of our conversation should be pure! Let us reveal something of **Christ** in our **attitude** and **spirit** towards **people**. Excel in kindness, mercy and healing. Let people **look forward** to meeting you again - and have **happy memories!**

(9) We must **love** people for **who** they **are**, not for some ulterior motive - such as a **target** for evangelism! People will ‘suss that out pretty quickly’! Be a **friend!** Be the **first** to say ‘**Good morning!**’, the first to **congratulate**, first to **welcome**, first to **apologise**. Paul *I have made myself a servant to all*”. We should be willing to **give up** watching our favourite TV programme in order to accept an invitation to go out for a pizza with a neighbour! If he asks you to come in a watch the rugby, you should! Let your neighbour **know** you are **interested** in him and **feels comfortable** in his presence!

(10) Finally – remember every Xn **is** an evangelist, whether he realises it or not. The Bible never **says** ‘**Be** a witness’, it always says ‘we **are** a witness’ – we are either good ones or bad ones. Being a Xn, everything you do is seen by the world in the context of Xnity, even in the most **mundane** of things!! Xn people are the only ‘Bible’ some folk today will ever read! Xn people are the **only glimpse** of Christ some people today will ever see! When people see **you** Xian man or woman, they will **make judgments** about **Christ!** They ought not to - but they do! It’s a fact of life!