

SOUL CRAVINGS: Topic #1:

Ashamed of Good News?

This is the first of 5 weekly topics for individuals or small groups @ South Abbotsford that introduces a creative approach to relational evangelism in partnership with Power to Change



WELCOME: (10 minutes)

What first impressions or feelings come to mind when you hear the word “evangelism?”

Explain!

REFLECTIONS: (40 minutes)

Text: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, Romans 1:16-17

In the text from 2 Timothy, Paul is pleading with Timothy not to be ashamed to testify about the Lord or ashamed of Paul, who was in prison in Rome for his faith. There appear to be several reasons why young Tim could potentially lapse into fear:

1. He may have had a timid personality (1:6).
2. He knew Christ and the Scriptures from infancy and didn't have the radical adult conversion experience of Paul (1:4-5, 3:14-15)
3. The growing hostility of the Roman culture (2:8, 4:6, 16-17)

In Rome Christians were being slandered as a superstitious cult. Cannibals! Haters of Rome! Under Nero a fierce persecution broke out against Chris followers! Anyone associated with Paul had every reason to fear execution, or being thrown to the lions in a Roman amphitheatre.

In the midst of such hostility in the prevailing culture- what would Timothy do?

While others were abandoning Paul, running in the opposite direction, Paul was pleading that Timothy come directly to him, **in prison**; to not be ashamed to identify with him and to suffer for the gospel. (4:9, 21).

So what are the lessons for us today? (Discuss/reflect on the following group questions)

- 1. How would you describe the current secular culture we live in today? What is the general attitude towards the gospel? Christians? The church?**
- 2. How would describe your own attitude towards sharing the gospel? On a scale of 1-10 (1= very embarrassed/ashamed; 10 –being super confident and prepared) how would you rate yourself?**
- 3. What are the main roadblocks for you in sharing your faith?**

Paul wrote to the first generation of believers in Rome: ¹⁶*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...*: (Romans 1:16)

The reason Paul was not ashamed of the gospel was because he had witnessed **its power** over and over again. As he shared the gospel, he saw the power of God at work. What power is this? Simply this: when the gospel story is told- the Holy Spirit convicts people of its truth. The Holy Spirit draws people from an eternity without God, to an eternity with God through Christ, both in the present and forever in heaven.

4. Have you seen the power of God at work in someone's life when they heard the gospel and responded? (Maybe in your life or someone you shared with). Can you tell the story?

It is easy to respond to Paul's challenge not to be ashamed in one of two extremes- either as **Avoiders** or as **Erupters**. (as described in Bill Hybels' book *Just walk across the Room*)

Avoiders say that the gospel really can transform lives, but they are **paralyzed** at the prospect of sharing their faith. Though it is not their intention, avoiders keep everything bottled up inside. When they sense God cracking open a door for them to walk through, they mysteriously fall silent. They get tangled up in their own insecurities, thinking....I just won't say this right.

Erupters have often had their lives dramatically upended by the good news, and they get so amped about God's grace, that they have a hard time containing their enthusiasm. Erupters live in a constant state of ready-to-burst optimism. But rather than really listening. Erupters feign attentiveness as they take stock of their spiritual ammunition. Bypassing authentic connection with people, they can't wait to launch their hidden agenda. And then....look out! Erupters let loose, spewing rapid-fire truth all over their stunned victim.

5. Which of these two extremes do you most closely identify with? Why?

6. Is there a better way?

ACTION POINTS: (30 minutes)

1. **Reflect on the people in your world:** Consider people in your lives who may have never heard the gospel, or who have never chosen to follow Christ. These could be family members, neighbours, work colleagues, classmates, or Facebook contacts.
2. **Invest in Friendships:** As you consider these people, prayerfully consider one or two of them who the Spirit may be prompting you to cultivate deeper friendships with in the weeks ahead. Share some of these names with the group.
3. **Prayer:** After surfacing some names together as a group- spend some time praying for these people together. Consider circulating these names to the group in an email/printed card, so the group can pray daily for each one.

4. Soul Cravings Experience: This is the first of 5 weekly topics that will culminate in 3 weekends (April 11, 18, 25) where a creative approach to relational evangelism will be presented at South Abbotsford Church. Begin praying for these weekends and to wet your appetite consider watching this You Tube Video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IglRUo78F84>

You may also want to check out the website www.icravechange.com