

SELLING THE GOSPEL- PART 2

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Lessons on why one should evangelize are pretty common in churches today; however, sometimes we don't study enough on how we are to evangelize, or "sell the Gospel." This is where I think it is beneficial to look back at the business world and see how companies use marketing to reach new customers and maintain relationships with customers.

Advertising is a huge component of marketing and can be defined as a form of communication used to encourage or persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to continue or take some new action, according to Wikipedia. Television, radio, print publications, internet, direct mail, signage, product placement, mobile devices and sponsorships are different mediums of advertising that businesses use to promote their product or service. Sales, another important part of marketing, employs different mediums as well, some of the more common being: direct sales (person to person contact), agency-based sales (ex. travel agent), retail sales, telemarketing sales, door to door sales, internet sales, mail-order sales, etc. The types of sales and marketing strategies vary from company to company depending on their particular target market, or the type of customer they are targeting. For example, let's say ABC corp. sells action-figure toys. Do you think ABC will advertise through direct mail and have a telemarketing sales strategy? Of course not! Since children (or their parents) would be the target market for their products, ABC would most likely advertise their toys on television, specifically on kids channels like Disney or Cartoon Network so that it will be seen by children. Since most people buy toys in retail stores this would be the sales strategy that ABC would attempt to employ.

What does all of this have to do with evangelism? I believe that understanding how different types of people react to different types of sales pitches, whether they be business or evangelical, can greatly improve the number of sales, or souls, gained. In the parable of the sower found in Matthew 13, we see that when the Gospel is preached it will be heard by all kinds of people. Some will not believe, some will believe only to fall away later, and some will believe and stay faithful. It's important to note that the sower doesn't discriminate as to where the seed falls (that is, to whom the word is preached). All are worthy to hear the Gospel; what they do with it is their responsibility. Like the business world, due to increasing denominationalism, Christian doctrines have become very competitive and, to use another business term, market-share is tough to gain. So, how do I sell people, or convince people, to obey the Gospel? When the apostle Paul preached to a new group of people, usually he

would establish some common ground and build rapport with them before revealing their need to repent and obey the Gospel. This is exactly how sales people operate. It works for them and it worked for Paul, why wouldn't it work for you or me? The person that you are teaching should feel the love and genuine care and concern for their soul when you are speaking to them (after all, they are your neighbor and you do love them, right?). Like business advertising and sales strategies, you can reach the lost in a variety of ways. There's nothing wrong with door to door teaching, as is the notable practice of certain denominations. I would recommend starting with people you already know and with whom you already have that common ground and rapport. There are a thousand ways to spark conversations with co-workers, friends and family members. It's just a matter of busting out of our comfort zone and risking a friendship that probably wasn't worth having in the first place if they respond negatively towards you. It's possible that most people will not really listen to what you have to say, but continue being friends with you just the same. Some might even look at you crazy, but eventually someone may respond as did three thousand Jews in Acts 2. That someone will make it all worth it, I assure you!

There are several other ways to evangelize in today's world. The internet has certainly been used for much evil, but it can also be utilized for good and it should be. You can use social networks, chat rooms, email, forum discussion boards, instant messenger, and the list goes on of ways to reach people online. Personally, I have used an East Texas-based website that has forum discussion boards on all different kinds of topics, although it is mostly about sports. In the General Topics Forum, I have been involved in several different religious discussions and used those discussions to defend the truth. Even though no one (that I know of) has been converted from the different discussions, many people were introduced to the truth and I gained a lot from the amount of study that it involved. Whether or not the internet is your thing, opportunities abound to teach others and a simple invitation to come to church or a Gospel meeting goes a long way. It is always important when "selling the Gospel" to establish common ground, build rapport, treat them as you would want to be treated, and most of all show them love and a genuine care and concern for their soul.

This article is to myself first, but hopefully there is something written here that will be beneficial to you as you grow spiritually and win souls for Christ. I've heard people say that they would rather see a sermon than hear one, emphasizing the importance of being a good example for others to follow. Certainly, being a good example is essential, but it shouldn't stop there. In order to convince someone to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of their sins, confess Christ, be baptized for forgiveness of their sins, and continue living a faithful and obedient life, they must to hear the word of God. You have to sell the Gospel! Businesses sometimes will send out thousands of direct-mail marketing materials, only to gain a handful of customers.

Judson Road Monthly Article
January, 2012

Similarly, when we sell the Gospel, we shouldn't expect three thousand converts each time, but with every soul the truth is exposed to, there is a chance!