

Jesus' Comprehensive Evangelism Primer

John 12:20-33

I. Series Introduction: The Exciting Road Ahead

A. A Vision of the Resurrected Christ in Revelation 1: What Would He Say About FBC?

Revelation 1:12-20 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷ ¶ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. ¹⁹ "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. The Seven Churches were Real Churches... But Also Symbolic
2. Every letter in Revelation 2-3 represented Jesus' evaluation of the church
3. Every letter began with some statement in which Jesus said He knew that church... all of its challenges and achievements... all of its strengths and weaknesses... its past and its future

4. We can and should listen to what Christ says to each church

a. Each letter ends with

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

b. Each letter gives a promise to him who overcomes

c. So... we need to listen to what Christ says to each church and be overcomers

i) From the church at Ephesus: learn the value of doctrinal and life purity, but the danger of **FORSAKING OUR FIRST LOVE**

ii) From the church at Smyrna: admire the courage of a **PERSECUTED CHURCH**, and lose our fear of persecution

iii) From the church at Pergamum: understand what it means to live **WHERE SATAN HAS HIS THRONE...**

iv) From the church at Thyatira: understand the danger of being a church that **TOLERATES SIN... ESPECIALLY SEXUAL SIN**

v) From the church at Sardis: understand the danger of becoming a **DEAD CHURCH...** a church living on its reputation from the past rather than reality

vi) From the church at Philadelphia: understand the value of being faithful to walk through the **OPEN DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY** the Lord sets before us

vii) From the church at Laodicea: understand the danger of being **SPIRITUALLY LUKEWARM... NEITHER HOT NOR COLD**

5. It made me wonder how He would evaluate FBC... what would He say to us to help us be maximally fruitful

B. Evaluating Where We Are and Where We Are Going

1. As the elders have sought to do some of that evaluation, we have zeroed in on this: a yearning to see more and more people brought to an initial faith in Christ, baptized, and then disciple
2. Also we desire to see more and more a love for Christ and His glory and a turning away from the things of this world
3. We desire to be POSITIVE... to be HELPFUL... to be BIBLICAL... to be PRAYERFUL... to be FRUITFUL!!

C. Ten Years from Now: A Culture of Evangelism... With Its Evident Fruit

1. People regularly strengthened in evangelism... regularly trained in how to do it... regularly enabled to overcome fear and be fruitful
2. People passionately prayerful about evangelism... regular patterns of extraordinary prayer for evangelistic fruit
3. Many testimonies of bold efforts made by FBC members to reach neighbors, coworkers, friends, and total strangers with the gospel
4. Creative outreach ministries conceived and executed by members of FBC at their own initiative
5. Steady stream of visitors being brought to worship by FBC members
6. Many people brought to faith in Christ and to water baptism on Sunday mornings
7. New converts being trained in the basics of the Christian faith and growing in maturity
8. Multiple spiritual generations of Christians: Mack Stiles, Cross Conference, working in Dubai... FOUR GENERATIONS (spiritually) sitting side by side

D. Two Infinite Journeys... We Must Make Balanced Progress

1. God has set before every individual and every church two infinite journeys

- a. Internal journey
 - b. External journey
2. Every good church is involved in BOTH JOURNEYS (internal and external)... but all good churches tend to favor one a little or even a lot more than the other
 3. FBC Elders: desire for balanced progress in BOTH
 4. External journey is in two types: MISSIONS and EVANGELISM
- E. My Desire: Hope-Filled Training, Encouragement
- F. Five Weeks in March
1. Special preaching: five sermons on evangelism
 - a. Biblical... seeking to root evangelism in the Scripture; topical messages, but also expositions from the key texts
 - b. Practical... seeking to help each hearer learn more about what we need to know to be fruitful evangelists; seeking to help educate mo
 - c. Encouraging... seeking to help each person overcome his/her fears and weaknesses in evangelism WITHOUT MAKING PEOPLE FEEL GUILTY!!!!
 - d. Motivational... seeking to motivate us with biblical motivations; seeking to encourage visionary dreamers to think of new ways to move out in evangelism
 2. Special discussion in Home Fellowships: focused on the sermon/evangelism
 3. Special prayer every week in Home Fellowships
 4. Training in BFL every Sunday morning in March
 5. Special prayer on Sunday evening, March 30, here at FBC, instead of HFs

II. Powerful Lessons on Evangelism from John 12

A. The Subjects of Evangelism: A Foretaste of a Vast Harvest (vs. 20-22)

John 12:20-22 *Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.*

1. Greeks = pagans, lost men, but interested in Judaism... and even more interested in Jesus
2. Not necessarily "God-fearers" like Cornelius, or else John would not have called them "Greeks" but something better
3. They perhaps had heard of Jesus' miracles... they want to meet Him!!
4. They come to Jesus' disciples to gain access to Jesus
5. Philip and Andrew work together to bring these men to Jesus; at that time "bringing people to Jesus" was literal and physical... but they become pictures of future Gentile converts to Christ
6. Jesus does not talk to them at all in the text... but they're presence there and their interest lifts Jesus' mind to the lofty work He's about to do for the sins of the world

Isaiah 49:6 *"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."*

7. Jesus will die for sinners from every tribe on the face of the earth

Revelation 5:9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

Application: We should YEARN to bring people to Jesus! We should try to draw out interest in people so that they are hungry to know more about Jesus! We should realize that these Greeks were the firstfruits of centuries of Gentiles who would be fascinated in Jesus and want to know more about Him?

DO YOU YEARN TO BRING PEOPLE TO JESUS? How much would you love to have someone come to you and say, “Can you tell me more about Jesus? Do you know Him? Can you introduce me to Him?”

B. The Unique and Repeated Pattern of Evangelism: The Death of a Seed (vs. 23-25)

John 12:23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

1. Jesus' immediate answer is amazing! His mind goes right to the cross... right to the PRICE HE WILL HAVE TO PAY IN BLOOD for these Greeks who want to know Him
2. Jesus at last says “THE HOUR HAS COME”... after all the waiting, the time has come to die... and He calls it “being glorified”... having all His attributes put on full display: His love, His holiness, His compassion/mercy, His power, His righteousness
3. He calls Himself the “Son of Man”: hearkening to the vision in Daniel 7 in which the Son of Man is the focus of worship for all the nations of earth

Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

4. But this is an immediate reflection on the COST OF THEIR SALVATIO... and of OURS... this is the real price of evangelism...

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

- a. As usual, Jesus draws a lesson from NATURE... a grain of wheat is a SEED, with the genetic material for a vast harvest locked up within itself
 - b. It must fall into the ground and DIE... if it does not, the harvest cannot come
 - c. But if it dies. It produces MUCH FRUIT
 - d. The fruit Jesus has in mind is SOULS SAVED from the wrath of God
 - e. This is a lasting spiritual principle... UNIQUE and NEVER TO BE REPEATED... the substitutionary death of Jesus as the Son of God in our place is a ONCE FOR ALL EVENT...
5. BUT it is also a PATTERN FOR ALL EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS to follow
- a. The redemption of sinners is accomplished once for all by the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross

Hebrews 10:10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- b. But the APPLICATION of that redemption is by the similar suffering and death of His servants to follow
 - c. Jesus' death is both UNIQUE and an EXAMPLE for all evangelism and missions to follow
 - d. The "FRUIT": each disciple who is saved becomes his/her own kernel of wheat that must also fall into the ground and die... in this way, the gospel is spread throughout the world
6. If the Kernel of Wheat REFUSES to die, it CANNOT BEAR FRUIT

C. Jesus' Command to Evangelize: Follow Him in Dying (vs. 26)

John 12:25-26 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

1. Jesus extends and clarifies His metaphor: to refuse to be the kernel of wheat and fall into the ground and die is to LOVE YOUR LIFE IN THIS WORLD
2. That means to yearn for a life of comfort and ease and prosperity and the respect of this world
3. To love your life means to love a good reputation with people and the benefits that come from their acceptance
4. To HATE YOUR LIFE in this world is a relative term... compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing and serving Christ, your life in this world is not worth comparing
5. Jesus is commanding His Servants to FOLLOW UP in this same pattern of dying
6. If we do, we are keeping our lives for eternity
7. Basic principle: the gospel cannot advance without our DYING... dying to ourselves, to our ease and comfort

Colossians 1:24-25 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness

Tertullian: the blood of martyrs is SEED FOR THE CHURCH

This is how our brothers and sisters CONQUERED THE ROMAN EMPIRE spiritually

Saints were willing to have their blood shed in the sands of the coliseum; to be crucified along the Appian Way... to be burned as torches for Nero's dinner parties; to be sewn into animal skins and set loose in the arena with packs of wild dogs to tear at them

This is how missionaries were willing to face tropical fevers to bring the gospel to the steamy jungles of Western Africa—we hear stories of how missionaries went knowing they would die within 18 months and how they packed their things in their own coffins

These are the stories that will make fellowship in heaven so amazing

But there are simpler, less spectacular forms of DYING... every witness who has ever screwed up his/her courage to witness to a coworker has died to himself

Every witness who crosses a street to meet a reclusive neighbor and build a relationship with him is DYING TO HIMSELF

Every student who risks ridicule to try to invite another student to a Bible study is DYING TO HIMSELF

Every family member who pulls aside an unsaved relative at a Thanksgiving meal and talks to her about her soul is DYING TO HIMSELF

It would be so easy for each of these witnesses to STAY SAFE... to LOVE YOUR LIFE IN THIS WORLD...

8. Jesus is promising FELLOWSHIP with anyone who will be willing to follow Him in laying down your life

John 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

Hebrews 13:12-13 Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

Application: I think verse 25 is the key reason why many of us NEVER SHARE OUR FAITH... we are too protective of our temporary comforts in this world and afraid of losing them; therefore, I think the result is verse 26... we are distant from Christ

D. The Stunning Reward for Evangelism: Honor from God (vs. 26)

John 12:26 My Father will honor the one who serves me.

1. Absolutely STUNNING!!! For those who are willing to follow Jesus in suffering, Jesus is promising an amazing reward...

2. The eternal God, the one before whom angels cover their faces, the one who dwells in unapproachable light, the God who created the ends of the earth, who calls the stars each by name... that HOLY OMNIPOTENT GOD will actually HONOR YOU if you serve Jesus in this way!!!
3. This is the doctrine of rewards

John 12:43 they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

1 Corinthians 4:5 At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

E. The Troubling Cost of Evangelism: Jesus' Infinite Suffering (vs. 27)

John 12:27 "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

1. This is John's glimpse into the pain that was fully revealed at Gethsemane

Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

2. Jesus reveals the TROUBLING in His soul over the pain He would undergo
3. It is very difficult to suffer... Jesus does not minimize that
4. But He also knows this was the very reason that God brought Him into the world
5. So also we as evangelists need to expect the INNER TURMOIL of nervousness, and of fear and of struggle when we try to witness...

6. People will attack us verbally... they will insult us... in some countries, they even physically attack and even kill the messengers of the gospel
7. Jesus' open anguish here shows us that it is NORMAL for us to feel troubled about being involved in evangelism
8. But Jesus also shows us the way out... not to shrink back from witnessing, but to realize this is the very reason God brought you to this point—so you could glorify Him by sharing your faith

F. The Ultimate Reason for Evangelism: The Glory of God (vs. 28-30)

John 12:28-30 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine.

1. Many motivations for evangelism... we'll talk more about this in a future sermon
 - a. Bad motivations
 - i) Guilt
 - ii) Pride
 - iii) Money
 - iv) Power
 - v) Fame
 - b. Good motivations
 - i) Love for people
 - ii) Compassion
 - iii) Training and habit
 - iv) Obedience

- c. The BEST motivation: “Father, glorify your name!!”
2. Our desire should be for God to be raised, and lifted up and highly exalted as He deserves
3. Jesus YEARNED and BURNED for the glory of the Father’s name
4. This is how Jesus worked through His own pain and suffering
 - a. “Now my heart is troubled....”
 - b. “What shall I say?”
 - c. “Father, save me from the hour??”
 - d. “No... it was for this very reason I came to this hour!”
 - e. “FATHER, MAY YOUR NAME BE GLORIFIED”
 - f. That was the motive for Jesus to die
5. We should desire that God be exalted in all the earth
6. NOTE: Inter-Trinitarian conversation proves aspects of the Trinity!!!
7. Glimpse into PRAYER in evangelism... more later
8. The greatest reason for evangelism and missions is the glory of God’s name

John Piper: (*Let the Nations Be Glad*)

“Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more”

The more passionate we are about God and His glory, the more active we’ll be in evangelism and missions!

If you are weak in evangelism, start with your worship life... do you fan into flame a passion for God within your own heart?

Jesus was willing to DIE so that God's name might be glorified... that the greatness of God might be put on display

In evangelism, we are getting to speak about how great God is in Christ... how great is God's power, how great His holiness, how great His compassion and mercy, how great is His love, how great and how just is His wrath against sin

THIS GLORIFIES GOD'S NAME... it puts Him on full display

G. The Violence of Evangelism: The Ruler of this World Driven Out
(vs. 31)

John 12:31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

1. Jesus speaks of the judgment of the world... the wrath of God that is coming because of the wickedness of rebellion
2. This is the fear of the Lord that drives evangelism... people are perishing without Christ because of their sins... their rebellion
3. There is a COMING WRATH... the judgment of God is coming in the world
4. But it's because of Satan, that ancient serpent, who lured man into sin at the Garden of Eden... Satan was given authority in the world by Adam... Satan rules this world

Luke 4:5-7 he devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

Ephesians 2:1-2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5. Satan rules this present dark world... Satan is DRIVEN OUT by evangelism and by the power of the Holy Spirit
6. BUT Satan does not give up his power lightly... he uses his power to oppose the gospel and fight its witnesses

[to the church at Pergamum] *Revelation 2:13 I know where you live-- where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-- where Satan lives.*

7. Christ suffered because of the wrath of God... Christ's witnesses suffer because of the wrath of Satan
8. BUT Jesus is DRIVING SATAN OUT... the ruler of this age is being gradually conquered by the spread of the gospel
9. Every time you lead someone to Christ, you are rescuing someone from Satan's dark kingdom

Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves

BUT we should expect suffering... it will take SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE to advance the Kingdom against such dark opposition... but our enemies are not people

Ephesians 6:12-13 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God

H. The Sovereign Power of Evangelism: Christ Drawing People (vs. 32-33)

John 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

1. The "lifted up from the earth" statement refers not to worship... to "lifting the name of Jesus higher and higher"

Lift Him up, lift Him up,
 Lift the name of Jesus higher.
 Lift Him up, raise His banner to the sky.
 He said, "If I be lifted up,
 I will draw all men unto me."
 Lift Him up, all ye people, lift Him up.

Ok... nice song, nice idea... and evangelism is a powerful form of worship; but Jesus is not using the phrase "when I am lifted up from the earth" to refer to worship but to the crucifixion

2. In context it clearly refers to Christ's crucifixion

John 12:33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

3. It refers to the fact that, by dying, Christ will unleash the power for salvation for people all over the world

4. AND He will sovereignly DRAW them to Himself

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

5. The sovereignty of God is on our side in evangelism... Jesus is drawing people to come to Him

6. The doctrine of IRRESISTABLE GRACE... a great encouragement in evangelism!!

7. The elect will come if we speak the gospel

Summary:

John 12:20-33 draws out some powerful themes that will help us in evangelism

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The Unique and Repeated Pattern of Evangelism: The Death of a Seed (vs. 23-25)

Jesus' Command to Evangelize: Follow Him in Dying (vs. 26)

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The Troubling Cost of Evangelism: Jesus' Infinite Suffering (vs. 27)

The Ultimate Reason for Evangelism: The Glory of God (vs. 28-30)

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III. Practical Steps toward Greater Fruitfulness

A. Embrace the Gospel for Yourself: We Are Not Justified by Works!!!

1. Have you come to Christ?
2. Galatians is clear: justification is not by works...
3. We are not saved by OUR evangelism... we were saved through OTHER PEOPLE'S EVANGELISM!
4. Get rid of all guilt... if we have sinned in this area, there is forgiveness; guilt is a terrible motive for evangelism!!

B. Assess Your Life... and Your Heart

1. "Search me, O God... show me my heart"
2. Ask God to open your evangelistic life up to yourself
3. Ask Him to evaluate your fruit in this area
4. Ask Him to show you your heart's tendencies... if you hardly ever (or NEVER) share the gospel with anyone, ask Him to show you why
5. Repent of whatever sinful attitudes you may have
6. Specifically ask the Lord to show you ways the world has a hold on your heart... Jesus said you have to hate your life in this world;

ask the Lord to expose ways that you are preferring yourself,
weakening your resolve to witness

C. Become a Spiritual Beggar to Become a Better Evangelist

1. Ask the Lord to transform your heart and lifestyle to be obedient to Him
2. Ask Him every day for witnessing opportunities
 - a. God grant me a chance to witness today
 - b. Give me the spiritual discernment to see it
 - c. Give me the courage to take advantage of it
3. Ask the Lord to pour out His Holy Spirit on you to help you grow
4. Begin praying for people to lead to Christ... collect the names of people to pray for

D. Get Trained: Learn the Gospel Message Well... and Learn How to Carry on a Gospel Conversation

1. Embrace that the gospel message is the power of God for salvation
2. Learn the God-Man-Christ-Response outline
3. How to preach the Law to someone to bring them to repentance for sin
4. Memorize Scriptures that will help you witness effectively
5. Learn how to turn a conversation to spiritual things
6. Training opportunities: Home Fellowships, BFL, Wednesday nights

E. Learn What Ministries are Reaching Out at FBC... and Take Part

1. Urban Ministry (Matthew Hodges): Jobs for Life... Children's Bible Studies
2. Caring Center

3. International Student Ministry... ESL Classes
 4. Undergrad Ministry: Kyle Mercer
 5. Prison Ministry: Jack Evans
 6. VBS coming up in June (Susan Fisher)
 7. HOST Ministry (Tony Fisher)
- F. Be Friendly: Make Friends More in Daily Life
- G. Consider How to Change Your Life to Make More Friends for Jesus
- H. Consider How to Meet Your Neighbors
- I. Dream and Ask God to Give You a Vision
1. William Carey: Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God
- J. Let's Expect God to Do Amazing Things Through FBC