



Editorial

IT IS NO SECRET

In my last editorial I considered some reasons why many Christians do not share their faith, and suggested some ways in

which that silence could be broken. Perhaps, though, you may smile as you read this, thinking that any Christians you know make *no secret* of their faith, and are far from reticent about sharing it! The endeavours of Christians no doubt arouse all manner of responses from a watching world. 'Why can't they just live their lives and butt out of mine?' 'Why don't they keep their narrow-minded, out-dated beliefs to themselves?' Even if you have a more sympathetic view towards Christians, you may wonder just what makes Christians tick, or motivates some people to leave secure jobs and home comforts to take the gospel to people they've never met in far off and much less affluent lands. In this editorial I want to look at just what compels the earnest Christian to leave their comfort zone, and to speak up for Christ.

1. The word 'gospel' means 'good news' – which is exactly what the gospel provides – so why wouldn't you share good news? When people get a brilliant CD, read a good book, eat in a restaurant with delicious food, enjoy a stay in a beauty spot or meet a wonderful member of the opposite sex, invariably they will excitedly share their discovery or good news with all and sundry. Delightful though all the things mentioned above may be, they pale into insignificance compared to the good news of everything that we abundantly find in the flawless and matchless person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Christians share their faith in obedience to Jesus' clear command in the gospels. When Christ walked upon Earth He poured His healing into countless needy and broken lives. And repeatedly He gave the very same command to those whose lives He had touched and transformed: "... Go home to your friends, and *tell* them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you." (Mark 5:19) When the angelic messengers told the women who came to Jesus' tomb of His resurrection, their first instruction was "Go quickly, and tell" (Matthew 28:7). Before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He gave His first followers the 'Great Commission' – they were to take His message to all the world (Mark 16:15) and be His witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That seems clear enough and good enough for me.
3. Christians do so because the love of Christ constrains them (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). He gave His all and died for them, so they endeavour to live for Him, to serve Him, and to take His message to others.

4. Christians share their faith because they have personally proved the things they share to be true. In my own life I have proved His presence, power, peace and protection in my own life, and have witnessed at first hand the absolute certainty and calm assurance with which my father and other family members have faced death. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, stated that ‘Our people die well’ and he hit the nail on the head. Christians want others to know how they can be right with God too that, when their time comes, they can face death without fear, but with confidence, certainty and peace.

5. Christians speak up for Christ because they care about people. When you care about others, you only want the best for them. Those who have experienced new life in Christ have found Him to be an unfailing ‘forever friend’, ever faithful, ever true (Heb 13:8 & 5). Is it any wonder they yearn and desire that others come to know, trust and love Jesus too?

6. Christians share their faith because of the power of the Bible’s message to change not only lives, but also eternal destinies. The over-arching aim of the Department for Social Development, the government department for which I work, is ‘helping people to change their lives for the better’ through helping them move towards employment and financial independence, providing support for those who face the additional and unavoidable costs that accompany living with a disability, and targeting benefit uptake programs towards those failing to claim their full, rightful entitlements. Hugely laudable though all such aims are, yet money alone can never effect deep, meaningful and lasting change on people, and can do precisely nothing to change the eternal destiny of anyone. That is something that faith in Jesus Christ alone can do.

7. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:10). In many parts of the Christian church today, the focus of sermons or messages is solely on what are viewed as the comforting or acceptable parts of the Bible’s teaching – things like God’s grace, love, mercy – or heaven. But other equally important and vital Biblical themes such as sin, wrath, judgment or hell are simply steered clear of. However, those who believe that God inspired the timeless message of the *entire* Bible know they have no authority or right to cherry-pick out the bits that are viewed as unpalatable or unwelcome. To do so would lead only to our sharing a misleading, incomplete and erroneous message. We must be true to God’s word, and follow the Apostle Paul’s wise example: “... I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God.*” (Acts 20:27)

8. Christians share their faith because they know that they only have one life in which to serve God, and to show and tell something of God's love in Christ.

I have only one life on this earth,
And as vapour it's passing away;
I must labour for treasures of worth,
Ere toil ends at the close of the day.

Only one life, and white are the fields,
with compassion this great need I view;
This one life that I have I will yield,
And the little I can, let me do.

Chorus

*Only one life to give,
I could never withhold it from God;
Only one life to live,
I must not miss the 'Well done!' of God.*

One poor life, small the offering at best,
Yet the world and the flesh often call;
This my answer must be to each test –
I'll not serve God with less than my all.

Jesus said "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4) Life at best is fleeting, opportunities pass, so we try to avail of them whilst we can.

9. Christians share their faith because they know that they will one day stand before God and give account of their life and service for Him. "Wherefore we labour that ... we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)

10. Christians share their faith because what greater joy can any Christian have than to be a link in the chain of mercy, love and grace that may end with someone trusting Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thess 5:19-20)

Perhaps you may know Christ as your Saviour, but rarely speak a word for Him. Remember that the reasons given above as to why Christians *do* share their faith serve as equally valid reasons *why* you *should* share your faith – especially when we live in a country where we currently have the freedom to do so – a blessing and a privilege that is not available in many countries, where sharing your faith may carry great personal risk. You, too, can one day reap in joy, a joy that is eternal. Every possession we accumulate in this life must one day be left behind. Yet there is something from this present life that we *can* bring with us to heaven one day – those whom we've prayed for, loved and laboured for, and whom we have seen come through for Christ. Now isn't that reason enough? A classic old hymn goes 'It is no secret what God can do.' If we know Him, may we ensure that His good news is indeed no secret.