



30 Days of Devotions  
EVANGELISM EMPHASIS MONTH  
September 2017



**September 1**

**Rev. Mike Jones, ONA Executive Director**

**Matthew 13:4-8**

*“And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

My first call out of Erskine Seminary was to Chattanooga, TN as a campus minister. I was invited to preach in a small (VERY!) rural town in the mountains of East TN. No stop signs, no police- just one main road- Mitchell Street. Being unfamiliar with that part of the country, I decided to go up on Saturday. I arrived to find the little town bustling with activity! It was the annual “Harvest Parade” and there were hundreds of people lining the one street. In fact, this was such a big deal that they brought in busloads of people from other towns to share watch this parade.

As I looked up and down the street I saw that every kid under 7 had a bucket. That’s when I realized why there was such a crowd...CANDY! When the floats passed the candy flew!

Now, there were two types of candy throwing locals on those floats. First were the ones I’ll call “strategic” candy throwers. They would take one piece of candy, scan the crowd looking for a familiar face, wait until they had made sufficient eye contact and launch the candy toward their chosen recipient. The other type of thrower was the one that just threw handfuls of wrapped delight with pure abandonment! They simply reached into

their bucket and gave the kids what they wanted and what they came for. It was fun to watch the kids trail after those floats where they knew candy was flowing freely.

In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a story, not about parades and candy, but about a farmer sowing seeds. Most of us know about the four types of soil: the rocky, the path, the weeds and the good soil. That farmer sowed those seeds “indiscriminately”- just throwing them all over the place. In those days, seed was extremely expensive and so a good farmer would make sure the seed only fell where it would have the best chance of growing, producing fruit and getting a return from his investment. This farmer challenges that thinking. In fact, the original hearers would have been horrified by this farmer’s actions! But, in the parable, he’s the hero.

If the seed is the presentation of the gospel, I wonder if we in our evangelism verve are less like that hero and more like the discriminating thrower- waiting until all the conditions are perfect before ever offering the words of life. I would ask you, based on 2 Timothy 4:2, **when** should you share the gospel? (The answer is “all the time.”) And, based on Mark 16:15, **with whom** should we share the gospel? (The answer is everyone!) And finally, **why** should we share the gospel all the time with everyone? The answer is simple- because we aren’t smart enough to know what kind of soil someone is!

I have a friend who was as dark as can be from my perspective. His life was a mess and he was hard hearted toward the things of God. Hard soil if ever I saw it! Our college ministry, a local church and the pastor invested hours of prayer and ministry into him and when we thought he was not even listening to the Holy Spirit, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior! None of us were smart enough to know that what looked like “hard packed path” was actually good soil! We didn’t know what God was up to, but we were faithful to sow.

So, how are you sowing? Are you waiting to throw the seed when it looks best from your perspective or are you sowing “indiscriminately” and allowing the Holy Spirit to define the soil from his perspective? I hope the devotions this month encourage you to freely share the good news of the gospel!

**September 2**  
**Ali Mitchell**  
**Romans 8:15**

*“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”*

Several years ago I was impressed with the gospel’s uniqueness in a conversation with a Saudi student about my sister and her husband’s children, several who are adopted. “You can’t really understand my religion unless you understand adoption,” I found

myself saying. At that moment, under the Holy Spirit's leading, evangelism became sharing the good news that God is a Father who desires to adopt us.

This is so foreign to Islam's understanding of Allah as a distant creator isolated from his creation. Think about all other world religions and cults. Every one distorts who God is. The mission of the Church to bring the gospel to all nations is so refreshingly different from every other belief system because of the Father love of God, who graciously restores us to himself in Jesus. Most people view God as a slave-master, an impersonal force, a spirit among many others, a Santa Clause, or a vending machine, but a loving, caring Father?

In our evangelistic relationships with our friends and neighbors, and in our worldwide mission, we are given the beautiful privilege of introducing people to our Father, our Daddy. He is so much more than a concept or doctrine we may try to convince people to accept! Let us share with others the family welcome we have received!

**September 3**  
**Rev. Matt Carr**  
**Matthew 4:18-20**

*"While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him."*

Dr. Russell Moore recently said, "Jesus doesn't want to be invited into *your* life. Your life is a wreck. Instead he invites you into *his* life."

That's what we see early in the Gospel of Matthew as our Lord Jesus began his Church by fishing for men. He calls Peter and Andrew to follow him, to enter into his life. He tells them if they will follow him, his life will invade theirs, and they will become men who call others to follow Jesus – disciples who make disciples.

Jesus doesn't qualify his call with a "probably" or "if you're gifted." The equation is simple: follow me, and I *will* make you fishers of men. The clear implication is that *everyone* who follows Jesus will be made by Jesus into someone who calls others to follow Jesus. So if we are not calling others to follow Jesus, what should we conclude about ourselves?

This is true for us as individuals and for our local churches – Jesus has invited us into his life, and if we are genuinely following him one of the major signs of life and vitality will be our participation in his mission through evangelism: fishing for people.

Church, are we following Jesus? Then we will be fishing for men. Is Christ's life in us? Then his vitality will be demonstrated in our engagement in evangelism.

May the Lord grant us grace to follow and fish.

**September 4**  
**Rev. John Kimmons**  
**Matthew 28:19a**

*“as you are going, make disciples of all nations”* (translated from Greek)

Remember wherever you go that Jesus is the Evangelist, and you can be his mouthpiece. Evangelism is a gift, a developed art, the responsibility of all believers, and the first step to discipleship. Training and encouragement are essential.

At 13, I was challenged for the first time to receive Jesus; at 18, I heard my first faith story from an elder. These things impacted me greatly. I became a Christian at 23. When sharing Christ, we leave the results and timing to Him.

Evangelism is about relationships where we share our faith stories. As God gives us opportunities, we present the gospel in a loving, simple way. It's a challenge to present the gospel winsomely, reflecting your personality, and still connecting with an ever-changing world. That takes discipline! Listen when others share the gospel. Practice telling your faith story with other believers to gain confidence. We are not all intellectuals like Paul, nor do we all serve like Dorcas. But, we can all talk about Jesus.

Only one percent of Christians share their faith regularly. To change that, we need pastors and church members who are trained and encouraged to be effective, enthusiastic evangelists. That includes immediate follow-up with people who visit our churches. The goal is to love people, to cultivate friendships, to listen carefully so we'll know the right time to share. Don't be discouraged- even Jesus was rejected at times.

Pray often that God will lead you to those persons he is working on. Be prepared when he opens the door to share the gospel!

**September 5**  
**Rev. Ben Carver**  
**Mark 16:19**

*“And they went out and preached everywhere...”*

Seven words from the final chapter of Mark’s Gospel describe the appropriate response to the death and resurrection of the Son of God. After Christ’s ascension to the Father, Mark records the response of the disciples. “And they went out and preached everywhere...”

Peter and James and the others knew that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross like a common criminal. They also knew that he was alive again. They knew that the man who was crucified to a Roman cross, was now walking on Roman roads.

This truth was transformative for the disciples. They went from cowering in a locked room in Jerusalem to itinerant proclaimers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They walked the hills and the roads announcing the good news of what Jesus Christ had accomplished through his death and resurrection. God had defeated sin and death and offers eternal life to all who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The truth of Christ’s resurrection is transformative today just as it was 2,000 years ago. It changed the lives of the disciples. Has it changed your life? Do you know the truth of Christ’s death and resurrection? If you do, then God calls you to announce the news to the people in your community, the people that work and live near you. They need to hear the transformative news that the Triune God has conquered sin and death and offers eternal life and permanent peace to all who trust in Jesus Christ.

**September 6**  
**Rev. Mark Tankersley**  
**Luke 9:5-6**

*“And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”*

In our world of concrete sidewalks, we can go weeks without getting our shoes dirty. However, in Jesus’ day, there were only dusty roads upon which he sent his followers to tell others about the Kingdom of God. Only when their message was rejected were they to “shake the dust off their feet” and move on.

The challenge for many of us is **not** to shake the dust off our feet, but rather, how to **intentionally** get our feet “dusty” by obediently, and creatively, taking the good news to

others. It is challenging in our cynical culture, but God says, “GO,” even if the message is rejected. The reality is that the gospel cannot be rejected (or accepted) if we do not go or “get our feet dusty.”

How does the Christian get “dusty” feet? There are creative ways. People in my church have taken in international high school students from Asia and shared the gospel with them. An older couple in our church has an annual picnic in their neighborhood, which has now led to monthly small groups with some unchurched neighbors attending. Some young students in our church have commended the gospel to unbelieving coaches.

Our world desperately needs Christians who are willing to be intentional with gospel living and gospel speaking. For now, let’s be less concerned about “shaking the dust” off our feet. The “beautiful feet” are the ones that bring the good news (Rom. 10:15), and that is going to require getting a bit dusty.

**September 7**  
**Rev. Mackay Smith**  
**2 Cor. 5:13-14a**

*“For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us...”*

Paul roots his ministry to the Corinthians in a radical, God-focused love. He commends himself not because he and his compatriots were “beside themselves” outwardly: creating impressive shows. Instead, their behavior was pretty normal (“we are in our right mind”). What made it effective for gospel ministry? Paul and his team were “beside themselves... for God.”

Paul is on the right track. Consider: Jesus did not witness weirdly. He performed miracles, but they were never parlor tricks. Many wanted more of a show (John 7:3-4), but the effectiveness of Jesus’ ministry did not need to be invented or contrived. Instead, Jesus lived “beside himself” in his allegiance to His Father, even to the point of death on a cross.

Opportunities to witness are around us everyday. Evangelism is not predictable target practice. God is preparing the harvest (John 4:35), not us. Thus, we must be ready for the unexpected.

How do we prepare? Let us find our own ministries characterized not by contrived show, but by our growing, Spirit-fueled love for God. Seek him in Word and prayer each day. Pray that he would fire your heart with the coals of Christ. Pray that we would burn as (imagine this!) lights of the world in our thoughts, words, and deeds.