

Evangelistic Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

- A. People are not there to listen to you. You are only an instrument of God. If you in any way communicate arrogance that listeners are privileged to hear you preach, you have failed.
- B. You are addressing the most basic need of mankind and can therefore expect greater spiritual attack from the enemy.
- C. Your audience will be mixed—some saved and some lost.

II. Tips in Preaching Evangelistic Messages

- A. Don't let the presence of Christians in the audience cause you to feel you have to present the gospel in a "new and exciting way" for them. Just model effective evangelism.
- B. The best evangelistic messages are expository ones. Preach a particular text of Scripture which has an evangelistic emphasis (e.g., in John's Gospel). Look up the page number of your text in the pew Bible and announce the page in your message. This way the non-Christians won't look foolish while everyone else knows where to find the passage.
- C. Preach as if you actually believe that unbelievers will go to hell (Eph. 2:12; Rev. 6:17; 20:15).
- D. Preach as if you believe you have the only solution to people's hell predicament (Acts 4:12).
- E. Preach the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-8)—not church attendance, not baptism, not works.
- F. Make sure you include a substitution illustration (pp. 200-3).
- G. Follow Bill Bennett's 12 principles of evangelistic messages in *30 Minutes to Raise the Dead*, 130-53:
 - 1. Pray it through
 - 2. Exalt Jesus
 - 3. Proclaim the Scriptures
 - 4. Preach positively (the gospel is good news—not bad news, so emphasize what people should do rather than what they should not do)
 - 5. Personalize sin (get specific enough to convict)
 - 6. Keep the sermon comparatively brief (Billy Graham preaches 25-30 minutes)
 - 7. Stick to the point (focus on your central idea)
 - 8. Make it simple (truth is understandable, don't flaunt knowledge; 1 Cor. 2:4-5)
 - 9. Make the message urgent (never preach in a "take-it-or-leave-it" manner)
 - 10. Press for a verdict (and expect decisions)
 - 11. Plead for souls (don't manipulate people—pray earnestly for them)
 - 12. Depend on the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11)

Grace Baptist Church Evangelistic Good Friday Youth Meeting
April 2, 1994
NIV

Dr. Rick Griffith
Single Message
20 Minutes

The True Meaning of Good Friday & Easter

Topical Message

Topic: The gospel
Subject: Easter weekend shows us the gospel
Complement: so that we may come to know God personally
Purpose: The listeners will accept Christ as Savior

Introduction (Following a drama on the crucifixion and resurrection...)

1. Arouse Interest: I trust this drama has answered some of your questions about the term “Good Friday.” When you take just the term itself, it sounds strange, like “rush hour” refers to the times of day when traffic moves the most slowly. Why is this Friday so “good”?
 - a. What’s so good about an innocent man getting betrayed by a trusted friend?
 - b. What’s so good about an innocent man getting framed and enduring six illegal trials?
 - c. What’s so good about an innocent man getting mocked, beaten, and killed?
2. While Jesus endured all this, He showed an amazingly great sense of confidence.
 - a. When betrayed, He showed no surprise and spoke a word that even knocked his captors to the ground.
 - b. During unfair trials He kept cool and confidently offered no defense to save Himself.
 - c. Even while agonizing on the cross He prayed for His torturers and even asked one of His friends to care for His mother!
3. How could Jesus have such confidence even while looking at death itself? It’s because He was confident of knowing where He was going after death.
4. Touch Need: Wouldn’t you like to live with this kind of confidence now on earth—even in much less severe circumstances?
 - a. Aren’t you amazed how your Christian friends live with joy in the midst of exams?
 - b. Wouldn’t you like the confidence of knowing that the best friend in the universe is right with you wherever you go?
 - c. Most of all, wouldn’t be great to know for sure where you will go after death itself? Do you know for sure where you are going after death?
5. Subject: Has anyone ever shown you how you can know for sure if you are going to heaven after you die? This is what I want to do in the next few minutes: explain how you can know for sure that you will go to heaven when you die.
6. The Bible tells us both bad news and good news. The bad news relates to you. The good news relates to God. Let’s first look at the bad news...

I. The bad news relates to you and sin.

- A. You are a sinner.
 1. Romans 3:23 says that every person has fallen short of God’s standards.
 2. Think for a moment how much you’ve sinned (3 sins/day, see Homiletics, 200)
 3. We may not all be as bad, but we’re all as bad off (non-swimmers, cf. Homiletics, 200).

(The bad news even gets worse...)

B. The penalty for sin is death.

1. Romans 6:23 is that death is the payment we all get for our bad deeds.
2. When I entered the CBD during rush hour I deserved the \$70 fine (see Homiletics, 200).
3. Judge: Part 1 (A judge saw that his son had committed a crime, see Homiletics, 201)

(This is bad news! We've all sinned and we see the results of death all around us! Now think of what it must have been like for Jesus' friends. They too knew they had sinned and they were putting their hope in Jesus. But just when they thought things were going great, bad news—He was arrested, put on trial, and crucified.)

Cue tape for singing "I've Just Seen Jesus" (then sing the solo)

(I told you the Bible has both bad news and good news. Now here's the good news.)

II. The good news relates to you and God.

A. Christ died to pay the penalty for sin.

1. Romans 5:8 says that Christ paid for our sin even though we were His enemies.
2. Judge: Part 2 (The judge paid the fine for his son's crime, Homiletics, 201)
3. Cancer (substituting bad cells for good ones, Homiletics, 201)

(Just as the bad news got worse, so the good news gets better...)

B. Your penalty for sin will be paid by Christ simply by trusting Him.

1. Ephesians 2:8-9 says we come to God by trusting Him, not our good works.
2. Doctor (trusted without knowing all about him, Homiletics, 202)
3. Niagara (faith is commitment, not intellectual assent, Homiletics, 202)
4. The resurrection allows us to know Christ personally (you can't know a dead man).

Conclusion

M.I.1. Easter weekend is about the good news that we can know God personally.

2. Anticipating Objections: Can you think of any good reason why you wouldn't want to receive Christ right now?
 - a. If you're worried about what your *Christian friends* who brought you would think, remember that this is why they brought you!
 - b. If you're worried about what your *non-Christian friends* will think, ask yourself, "Am I going to let them make all my most important decisions in life?"
 - c. If you're concerned about what your *parents* might think, why not accept God's free gift now and then trust that they will accept Christ too!
 - d. If you think you're *not good enough*, you're right! You don't have to be *good* enough, only *bad* enough—and you all qualify!
3. Would you like to pray right now to tell God that you're trusting Christ alone as Savior?
4. Here's a suggested prayer: "Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe Jesus died for me and arose. I trust Him now as my Savior. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Amen."
5. Assurance: Review truths of 1 John 5:11-13 or Revelation 3:20

Illustrations to Use in Sharing the Gospel

Love

Paternal (God loves us because we are made in His image): Do you have a son or daughter? Do you love him/her? Why? (because he's part of my family, made in your own image) Would you still love that child even if he/she did something wrong against your wishes? We, too, are originally part of God's creation, made in his image. But even though we've turned away from Him, He continues to reach out in love to us.

Sin

Rock (All fall short of God's standards): Let's suppose you and I were both to pick up a rock and try to throw them to China (or some other location mentioned in the conversation). Neither of us would reach the target because it's too far. Well, God is completely holy and perfect, so He's target for us is perfection. None of us can claim to be without sin, so we all fall way short of His standard.

Three a day (All fall short of God's standards): How bad are we in comparison to God's standard of perfection? Let's suppose you were really a relatively good person who sinned only three times a day. This includes every bad thought, word, and action. This would amount to over 1000 sins a year. Multiply this by your age and you'll see that you have fallen much short of God's perfect standard!

CBD (We have no excuse for our sin): I once drove down to a hotel on Orchard Road at 6:15 PM. As I approached the road I noticed that the big sign over the road said "Restricted Zone: In Progress." However, it was too late to turn back and get a day pass. The police wrote down my car's license number and three weeks later I received a ticket for \$70. Even though I was sincere, even though I was ignorant of the sign until it was too late, even though I could offer other excuses, in the final analysis I had no excuse.

Archery (All fall short of God's standards): One definition of sin is an archery term that means to "miss the mark." There's a bulls eye that is rarely hit. Morally speaking, God is perfect and always hits the "bulls eye." But we always fall short of His standards.

Non-swimmers (Man cannot save himself): Suppose a ship sank but none of the passengers in the water could swim. When each turned to his friend for help, what would happen? Of course, all would die, for they would all be in the same predicament. What if each one tried to save himself by pulling himself out of the water? Death would also result. In like manner, man cannot save himself *spiritually*. In fact, spiritually speaking, we're all in the water together and drowning.

Death

Capital Punishment (Certain sins result in death)

In Singapore the government has established various laws to punish those who sin. If one is caught with a certain amount of drugs in his possession at the airport, the law says that person must die. Why? To uphold standards for society. God's standards are even higher than the government's and He says that sin must result in death.

Wages (We have all earned death): Suppose you were to work for me for a day and I pay you \$50. This would be your wages since it represents what you have earned. The Bible says that because of our sin we have all earned death as our wage (Rom. 6:23).

Substitution

Book (Christ bore the weight of our sin upon Himself): Your sin weighs upon you just like this book weighs down my hand. But my other hand represents Jesus, and God desires to take this weight off of you to place it on Jesus (turn book over and place on other hand).

Cancer (Christ exchanges His goodness for our sin): Suppose you had cancer and through some medical means I was able to take your cancer cells into my own body in exchange for my good cells into *your* body. What would happen to me? Right, I would die. What would happen to you? Yes, you would live.

Kai (Christ gave His blood for us)

During the Vietnam War there was an orphanage located near an American Marine Base. One day the Viet Cong fired mortar shells into the orphanage, killing dozens of children and wounding many more. A boy name Kai had a seriously wounded friend who needed a blood transfusion. Kai's friend had a rare blood type and only Kai's blood matched it. Little Kai had never heard of a blood transfusion before but when the American doctors explained it would save his friend's life, little Kai volunteered. As Kai's blood began to flow to his friend, Kai began to whimper. When the doctors asked if it hurt, he said no. A little later he whimpered again. Again he told the doctors it did not hurt. Finally the doctors asked, "What's wrong, Kai?" With tears coursing down his light brown, dusty cheeks, Kai asked, "When am I to die, sir, when am I to die?" You see, little Kai did not know that he was to give only a *portion* of his blood. He thought he would give it all, and he was willing to die for his little friend.

Snake (Christ took the cause of our death upon Himself): A poisonous snake once bit a little girl in her backyard. Seeing that the girl would be dead in just a few minutes, the girl's mother cut her daughter's leg and sucked out the venom. The girl lived, but the poison killed the mother, who in effect had died as her daughter's substitute.

Drawbridge (People take for granted Christ's death for them): A man once had a job to lower a drawbridge twice a day at 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM for people to take a train over a river to and from work. He had a young boy whom he loved very much that was too young for school so he often accompanied his father up to the switching station. They would often wave to the train passengers as the train passed by. One day at about 3:45 while the bridge was up the man lost track of the whereabouts of his son, who had wandered off. He looked for him panicking for several minutes but had to give up the search as the train was coming at full steam towards the raised drawbridge. He made it back to the switching house in time enough to lower the bridge, but just as he reached for the lever he spotted his son, far down below him—in the midst of the gears! The father had to make a split second decision—either to leave the bridge up and cause the train to hit the raised drawbridge and crash into the river, or to allow the gears to crush his only son to save the train passengers. With pools of tears in his eyes and great anguish in his heart he lowered the drawbridge, crushing his small boy in the powerful gears. The people on the train safely passed by as usual, unaware of the great cost to save their lives. Those of us on earth *are* aware of an even greater cost to save us—the precious Son of the Father—who was crushed for our sins. Yet we often act like the passengers and glibly cast aside the tremendous sacrifice on our behalf.

Judge (God balances his fairness with mercy): A judge once had a boy come before him for sentencing only to discover that the lad was his own son. In order to be fair to the law, he set the fine at the appropriate amount, but then did something quite unusual. Laying down his legal robes, he came down from the bench and paid the fine himself to the officer, thus satisfying the legal requirement while at the same time being gracious to the one he loved. In like manner, Christ also saw our awful predicament in our disobedience, except in our case the penalty was much more severe—death itself. But Jesus laid aside his royal robes as God and came and paid that death penalty himself, thus satisfying the penalty and showing us his grace.

Twins (Satisfaction for sin has been paid by Christ): Suppose you killed someone and ran away, then the dead person's family members came looking for you for revenge. However, your twin brother/sister loves you very much and delivers himself/herself over to these people, who vent their anger by killing him/her. This would satisfy the anger of the relatives and save your life.

Soldier (Christ died for ungrateful, ungodly people): A promising, young, American lieutenant graduated from West Point Military Academy and soon found himself leading a group of recruits to fight the Viet Cong in Vietnam. One night they confronted the enemy who wounded one of their men. The rest ran for cover in a trench where they stayed all night, listening to the groans of the dying, wounded soldier a few feet away. Finally, the lieutenant could not bear to hear the groans of his friend any longer and risked his life to save the man. He successfully pulled him back to the trench, but as he was about to hop in himself

he was shot in the back and killed instantly. Sometime later, back in the US, the brave lieutenant's parents heard that the young soldier whom their own son had saved was in town. The surviving soldier came to their home late, drunk, using profanity and insensitive to the great cost given for his own life. After shutting the door behind the young soldier the bereaved mother could only say, "I gave my own precious son to save *that* wretch of a man?" Likewise, the Father gave his precious Son, Jesus Christ, to save an ungrateful, profane, race like ours.

Gift

Birthday (Seeking to earn our salvation insults God): On your birthday people give you gifts, don't they? Have you ever insisted upon paying for a gift? How do you think your friend or relative would feel if you did this? How do you think God feels when He offers us eternal life for free but we insist that we must pay for it (by our good works, baptism, church attendance, money, religious rituals, etc.)?

Pencil (The gift of salvation must be received to apply to us): I would like to give you this pencil for free (extend it to the person). If you pay me 10¢ or *any* price for it, it's not a gift. If you work for me in any way it's not a gift. It's simply yours—you just need to receive it.

Faith

Jet (Christ is trustworthy): Let's suppose I was employed by the ticket counter at an airport in a poor country to lead you to your jet to get you back to Singapore. So I lead you to a jet that hadn't been painted for years, had oil leaking out of the back, had part of a wing broken off, and had a hole in three of the windows? How would you feel? When you hesitate, I simply reply, "Oh, don't worry. Just have *faith* and this jet will get you to Singapore!" The important thing isn't the amount of your faith, it's the condition of the jet!

Ice (Christ is trustworthy): If you walked out on a lake frozen over with ice 1 millimeter thick, what do you think would happen? Of course, you'd fall in! What if you *really sincerely believed* that the ice would hold you up? Yes, you'd *still* fall in! How about if the ice was 1 meter thick, would it hold you up? Even if you had very little faith that it would? You see, the issue is not *how much* faith you have, it's what or *whom you place your faith in!* Many people are sincerely trusting "thin ice" to sustain them in this life and the next, but it won't work. On the other hand, even if you place the little faith that you have in Christ, you place this trust in the right source. He'll sustain you.

Chair (We all exercise faith everyday): Have you ever personally met the designer of this chair? (pause for answer) When you sat down on this chair you exercised faith.

Doctor (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Once my wife got very sick and I took her to the hospital. When the doctor gave her some pills to take, she simply took them without asking any questions at all! Can you imagine that? She had never *seen* the man before, we had never *been* to this hospital before, and we didn't know *who* made the pills or even their *chemical composition!* Why would she do such an outrageous thing as take a pill which, for all she knew, could have been poison? (pause for answer) This was a simple act of faith in the credentials of one whom the hospital had deemed competent. As my wife found the doctor competent to meet her physical needs, I have found Jesus Christ competent to meet all of my spiritual needs.

Pilot (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Have you ever taken a plane ride? Did you personally know the pilot of the jet? No, you exercised faith in this person to get you to your destination without ever knowing him.

Niagara (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): A famous tightrope walker once performed the greatest feat of his career by walking across Niagara Falls with only the aid of a balancing bar. The crowd was very enthusiastic! "Do you think I can do it without the balancing bar?" he asked in response. The crowd cheered him on, so he did it. "How many feel I can take a wheelbarrow across and back?" The crowd went wild again, "Yes! You can do it!" they yelled. So he went back and forth with a wheelbarrow. "Who believes I can do it again with a dog inside?" the

tightrope walker shouted. “We do!” Responded the crowd, so a dog was brought over, placed in the wheelbarrow, and the two made another successful trip. “Now who believes that I can do it with an even heavier load within the wheelbarrow—with the weight of a person inside?” he asked. By this time the crowd was ecstatic and going wild. “Any volunteers?” came the request. (pause) No one volunteered! They believed *intellectually* that he was able to take them across, but they were not committed to this belief. In like manner, many people *intellectually* believe Christ can take them to God but they are unwilling to *commit* themselves to that belief. Such belief without personal commitment is not genuine belief.

Circles (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): Two circles can be used to represent two kinds of life. Trusting Christ means being willing to turn your life over to Him to let Him direct your life. (See Four Spiritual Laws)

Wedding Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

- A. People are not there to listen to you. They want to see the bride and groom, talk to their relatives and friends, or get a free meal.
- B. Those closest to you in physical distance are the farthest from you in attention to your message (the bride and groom will have to hear the cassette later since their minds are definitely on other things).
- C. This is both a time of joy and nervousness.

II. Tips in Preaching Wedding Messages

- A. Be brief. Don't exceed 10-15 minutes. A general rule is: the less air-conditioning, the less sermon. In other words, "the hotter, the shorter."
- B. Decide who your target audience is. Will you speak to the couple (not advisable)? unbelievers in the audience? the Christians listening? Tailor your message to your intended audience.
- C. Remember that people will not have their Bibles so don't ask them to look verses up. If there are pew Bibles then give the page number of your text.
- D. Be personal. Talk about the couple by name. Try to avoid phrases like "the bride and the groom" as they sound too detached and mechanical.
- E. Use humor. Nothing releases tension like a few good laughs.
- F. *Always* include a good explanation of the gospel and an invitation to trust Christ. Weddings always have the unsaved in attendance. Let them know the couple wishes for you to share how to trust Christ.

Funeral Sermons

I. Uniqueness of the Situation

- A. People are not there to listen to you. They have come to show respect for the dead and the family. However, though they may not know it, at this time they are *most* eager for the preaching ministry!
- B. The listeners are especially interested to hear about the afterlife (Eccles. 7:1-4). Grief has a way of reducing us to the basics in life.
- C. People never die at convenient times. If you don't plan ahead for funerals then your preaching will suffer that particular week (either your funeral message or your Sunday morning message will be lousy). It's best to have some funeral messages already prepared in advance at least in outline form for: a Christian, an unbeliever, a tragic accident, etc.
- D. The audience is always a mixture of believers and unbelievers.
- E. This will be one of your few times to speak in a home, which provides a more natural environment for ministry than a church building gives.
- F. Remember that grief is real for your listeners.

II. Tips in Preaching Funeral Messages

- A. Rules of introductions need not apply as closely. There is less need to get attention, people already intensely feel their need, and they won't be listening for structure anyway.
- B. Include more illustrations and be less didactic nature. It's almost impossible to share too many stories in a funeral message—especially personal ones about the one who passed away. Don't feel you have to share some incredible pearls of wisdom from the Word. Don't be afraid to remind people of what they already know.
- C. Remember that people will not have their Bibles so don't ask them to look verses up. Include much more Scripture reading than normal, particularly the favorite verses of the deceased.
- D. Funeral preaching must evidence a pastoral tone. Pray that you will find the balance between gloominess (which is overcome by grief) and cheeriness (which ignores the reality of grief).
- E. Be personal. Talk about the deceased by name. Try to avoid phrases like "our dearly beloved departed" as they sound too detached and mechanical. Tell details about his life, family, work, worth, influence, and faith in Christ if he knew the Lord.
- F. *Always* include a good explanation of the gospel and an invitation to trust Christ. You will have more non-believers at funeral messages than any other ones so don't miss this opportunity. Speak about the "brevity of life, the certainty of death, the need of a Savior, the awesome eternity to come" (W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors*, 300—see this book for many practical tips regarding funerals).
- G. Perhaps one of the most important tips is: *be short!* Never exceed 15-20 minutes. Say what needs to be said, then sit down.

Psalm 116:15-16

Topic: Death (Believer's)
 Subject: Seeing death merely from a human perspective brings little comfort
 Complement: but seeing God's perspective of death brings us great comfort.
 Purpose: The listeners will find comfort that God has looked forward to Cecil's home going.

Introduction

1. [God always prepares us for death (DEATH preparation for –Corrie ten Boom—see p. 209)]
2. Seeing death merely from a human perspective brings little comfort but seeing God's perspective of death brings us great comfort (Main Idea).
3. This is why we need to see Cecil's death from God's perspective.

I. The home going of Cecil from our human perspective is separation.

- A. His home going is separation to us because in Cecil we have lost a warm, close, husband, father, brother, co-worker, friend.
- B. It's separation because we think of how he relates to us now—not to God.
- C. His home going is separation because we have begun a period when we will not see him for a time. But for him that limitation called time has been removed. As one wrote,
 1. [Read quote under file card called “DEATH ends time”—see p. 209]
 2. We still dwell in time, but not so with Cecil. For him time is gone.

(So in our humanity we see Cecil's passing as separation, but our human view differs from God's because...)

II. The home going of Cecil from God's perspective is reunion.

- A. Psalm 116:15-16
 1. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am your servant... the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains."
 2. No doubt the Lord has looked forward to Cecil's home going more than we have.
 3. But yet in a sense we have been freed from our chains as the psalmist said—chains of not knowing how long she would continue to live, chains of our human limitations of the plan of God, chains of seeing his bound by his body.
- B. So from God's perspective—the real, true perspective—Cecil is experiencing a reunion with the Lord he has desired for many years. He now sees this glory firsthand.
- C. D. L. Moody saw his upcoming death as his glorious triumph (DEATH believer's—see p. 212)...

Conclusion

1. We see Cecil's home going as separation, but God views it as the reunion He's desired (M.I. shorter).
2. It's wonderful to know Cecil was received into wide-stretched, open arms longing for his coming.
3. Cecil is saying at this very moment, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! It is glorious!"