

Sharing Your Faith According to Your S.H.A.P.E.— Part 2

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How a Christian G.R.O.W.S. (Spiritual Growth Series)

Matthew 5:13-16

Have you ever been in a situation in which your individuality, the way you are wired, was completely stifled? Many of you who have served in the military certainly experienced that where everything down to your underwear was prescribed by the government – the time you woke up; what you ate; how you stood; how you brushed your teeth; where you lived – it was one size fits all. It didn't matter how intelligent you were or how creative; what your tastes or preferences were.

And this is often the experience of children in public school.

The problem of one-size-fits-all

I remember as a child being bored to tears in elementary school. We would go over the same math problems or the same social studies lesson a dozen times until everyone in the class got it. I remember sitting in the class just trying to entertain myself by bothering my neighbors – telling jokes, filling in the blanks when the teacher paused. After a few minutes of waiting for folks in the class to answer a question, I would just yell the answer out. I probably heard a thousand times in the 3rd grade, "Richard, raise your hand." All through school I did well at every subject except self-control.

One of the wonderful things about discovering a relationship with God is that God treats us differently than the U.S. Army or the public school system. The God that we meet in the Christian Bible is the God of individuality. He made us all different, different temperaments, different life experiences, different perspectives. We Christians often quote Jesus and his words in John 14:6,

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

There is just one way to God and that is through Jesus.

But what we don't add to this statement is that there are six billion ways to come to Jesus. There are as many ways to come to Jesus as there are people on the planet. There is no one-size-fits-all approach either for the follower of Jesus, who is sharing their Christian faith with a friend, or for the person who is really inquiring about a relationship with God. There are different approaches that we take in sharing our faith with different people.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. Some people process life almost entirely through their heads. They trust their reason; they trust what their brains tell them is true; they are hard-headed scientists, attorneys, secularists, some naturalists. And for people like this, it is often helpful to offer rational arguments that can open the door for that person to consider claims of Jesus seriously.

There are any numbers of books that I've given to people who are hard-headed rationalists. I've given out the book *"Mere Christianity"* by C.S. Lewis dozens and dozens of times over the last three decades. It has been very helpful in laying out a rational, reasonable, logical case for the Christian faith. I think the books by Lee Stroebel – *"The Case for Christ"*; *"The Case for Faith"*, are very helpful as well.

The problem with the purely rationalistic approach to the Christian faith is that many people are not reached this way. This is something that many followers of Jesus, who are sharing their faith, don't get. They think that if an argument is reasonable to them, then it ought to win the day with everyone. So if a person doesn't become a follower of Jesus after reading a certain book, or hearing a certain argument, it is either because they are stupid, they don't grasp the force of the argument, so we better go over it again more slowly and loudly, or they are too sinful. They will not grasp the force of the argument, so we had better pray for them.

Now, it is possible that the person we are talking with is either too stupid, or too sinful to grasp your argument. But it is also possible that they are someone who is going to be reached by a very different approach to Jesus. Their personality, their cognitive style, their wiring may not incline them to faith simply as the conclusion of a series of brilliant arguments.

I've been doing on Christian growth called "How a Christian G.R.O.W.S." I've said over the last couple of months that it is not automatic that if you are a follower of Jesus you will grow spiritually. Just marking time doesn't mean that you are getting closer to Jesus. Just getting older doesn't mean that you are getting more freed up from your bad habits or addictions. Just getting older doesn't mean that you are becoming kinder or more forgiving, more empathetic, more willing to give; that you are like Jesus. So there are some basic practices and habits that you need to put in your life to grow. Here is the acronym G.R.O.W.S.

G.R.O.W.S.

G=Giving

R=Relationships

O=Outreach

W=Worship

S=Spiritual Disciplines

Today we are going to talk about outreach. As I said, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to either the person who is being spoken to about the Christian faith, or the person who is sharing their Christian faith. Last week I gave you another acronym to

talk about the different ways that God uses followers of Jesus to point people to his Son Jesus. The acronym I used was S.H.A.P.E.

S.H.A.P.E.

S=Service

H=Hospitality

A=Announcement

P=Power Evangelism

E=Entrepreneurship

And while every follower of Jesus needs to engage in acts of service and hospitality; we all need to announce and we all need to speak; we all need to pray for more of the Spirit's power; nevertheless, followers of Jesus are going to be oriented towards particular strengths, particular gifts – different shapes if you will.

Last week I covered the first three letters of the acronym S.H.A.P.E. I talked about service, hospitality and announcements. Today I want to tackle the last two letters: Power Evangelism and Entrepreneurship. So this is the second part of the message I started last week. By the way, you can pick up any of my messages in the bookstore. We have CDs, and all of the messages are podcast. You can go online at www.vineyardcolumbus.org, and get any of my messages. I've called today's talk, "Sharing Your Faith According to Your S.H.A.P.E. Part 2". Let's pray.

Throughout the New Testament we find many, many people are brought to faith in Christ through the approach the founder of the Vineyard movement, John Wimber, called Power Evangelism.

The approach of Power Evangelism

Power evangelism, put very simply, is the approach of having the door to Jesus opened in someone's life through their experience of God's reality and power. It is the personal experience of someone who says, "O my goodness! I have felt God's presence." Or I have experienced God's healing. I have seen something of God's supernatural intervention in my life that inclines me now to believe that there is a personal God who is calling me into relationship with himself. Power evangelism; an encounter with the supernatural God that opens a person up to faith in Jesus.

We see it all through the New Testament. In John 4 Jesus is traveling from the North in Galilee through Samaria down to Jerusalem. It was a hot day. He's tired and he sits down by a well and engages a woman in a conversation. Jesus breaks down this woman's walls, her defenses to faith. And how does Jesus break down this woman's defenses to faith in him? He doesn't hand her a copy of "*Mere Christianity*". He doesn't go through the theologian Thomas Aquinas' famous Five Proofs for the Existence of God, because Jesus knows that that's not the way to this woman's heart. It is not a one-size-fits-all situation. And so we read in John 4 these words:

John 4:16-18

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

The woman's response is found in John 4:19,

John 4:19

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet."

The approach of prophetic evangelism

The impact of Jesus' prophetic insight is that there is a massive revival that breaks out among the Samaritans. Here is what we read in John 4:39-41,

John 4:39-41

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers.

Now, it is unfortunate that even in Vineyard churches how often prophecy is divorced from evangelism. In some Christian circles we talk about the prophetic, but it is very introspective and it only involves words that someone might get in a woman's group, or a small group, or in church – a word that's for another follower of Jesus. So in many Christian circles, including most Vineyards, we have prophecy on the one hand and then there are those who are outwardly focused and who engage in evangelism on the other hand. But throughout the New Testament, we see people breaking down walls of resistance to faith through prophetic words that pierce the heart of unbelievers. There is an evangelistic use of prophecy that is outward focus towards the unbelieving world that the apostle Paul commends to our attention in 1 Corinthians 14,

1 Corinthians 14:24-25

But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, 25 as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

And notice the unbeliever's response to this prophetic evangelism which is the response to all power evangelism,

1 Corinthians 14:25

as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

The result of true prophetic evangelism is the experience of an individual in which they say God is real. I've just encountered him. I've just experienced him. I can't believe that God just called me up on the phone and that he knows me by name.

A few years ago I was having coffee with a member of our church. She introduced me to her gay friend, who had the AIDS virus. Her gay friend was very suspicious of me as a Christian pastor. He had all of his defenses up. As we talked I could just feel the tension in the air. It was like he had his guard dogs out, the spotlights were shining from the guard tower, and the flasher was flashing: Warning! Warning! Christian pastor!

I tried to engage him and lighten the atmosphere, but he was having none of it. He got up from the table and went to talk with someone else for a little while. I prayed silently to the Lord and I said, "Father, I would really like to be used in this man's life to assist him to come to faith in you. Will you show me something that will communicate something of your reality?"

Immediately, I had a picture in my mind's eye of a burning coal and this man holding the burning coal in his hand until it burned through his hand. I had a very vivid internal impression that the burning coal was his unforgiveness towards his mother.

This young man sat back down at our table. And I said to him, "You know, I am a pastor and I believe that God is still alive and God still speaks. Could I share with you a picture that I think God just showed me about your life?" His eyes were wide open, "O my goodness, what's going to happen?"

I said, "I had a picture in my mind of you holding a burning coal in your hand and you were gripping it so tight that it was literally burning through your hand. And when I asked God what it was, I felt like he said to me that it was unforgiveness towards your mother. Does any of that make any sense at all?" He sat down at the table and began to weep. He said that he had gotten the same picture that week. It was a burning coal inside of his chest of anger towards his mother and it was just burning through him.

At that coffee shop that young man experienced the reality of God; that God knew him; that God cared personally about him.

My friend, John Wright, is an English pastor in Nottingham. He pastors a church there. He was walking down a street in London when he saw a young man sprawled out on a stoop. John said he looked at him and his first impression was: Here is a healthy, young guy lying on a stoop. Why doesn't he have a job? But as John pass the man, he felt like he heard the Holy Spirit say: Go back and tell that young man that I love him and that he needs to come back to me.

John walked for a while. He didn't really want to do it. But there was this internal tug that he felt that he needed to go back and speak to that young man. So he turned around and walked back. He said to the man: Do you mind if I sit down? He sat down and they began to chat. He said, "The reason I came back is I felt like God wanted me

to tell you that he loved you and he wants you to come back to him. Does that make any sense to you?”

The young man said, “You are the third person today that’s shared that with me.” He told John that he had been a follower of Jesus and had fallen away. He had gotten into drugs and was a million miles away from God. He had been wondering if God saw him, or cared about him.

Prophetic evangelism. Through a simple prophetic word, someone who is far from God experiences God’s reality.

And then there is the approach that I’ve called Prayer Evangelism.

The approach of prayer evangelism

What we are doing in the approach of prayer evangelism is that we are encouraging the person who is struggling to believe in God to try God out. Don’t just stand back, aloof, weighing the arguments. Start on the journey. Act as if God is true. Try it, you’ll like it! That’s the approach of Psalm 34:8,

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are those who take refuge in him.

Countless people have set out on a journey towards discovering whether, in fact, God is true and they have found along the way that his promises can be counted on. They had a self-authenticating experience of God’s faithfulness and his love.

The try it, you’ll like it approach – taste and see that the Lord is good – is the approach that jewelers take when they are selling an engagement ring to a young couple. Some jewelers talk your head off about the 4 C’s of a diamond’s quality – cut, color, clarity and carat weight. But some jewelers are smart enough to stop talking and the way they make their sale is to just simply put the diamond ring on a piece of black velvet under a bright white light and let the diamond take over for itself.

Try Jesus – you will like him!

A few years ago I became friends with a post-doctoral student in chemistry. He was from Australia and had almost never went to church in his entire life. He was brought to the Vineyard by a friend. He came here and it was an entirely new experience for him. I talked with him after his first visit here and I said: What did you think? He said: Well, I liked it, but you need to understand that I am an atheist. I will call him Eric.

Eric was a really great guy. He was a lot of fun and we had great talks together. One day I said to Eric: Eric, why don’t you just try out this Christian faith that I’m talking to you about? Why don’t you at some point in the next week just act as if God exists and

when you have a real need, ask God to meet your need. If there is some crisis that happens this week, ask God to help you in that crisis.

Five days later, Eric and I sat down for coffee. He said: Rich, you will never believe what happened yesterday. I said: What happened? He said: I was pulled over for speeding by the police. I was sitting there as the policeman was checking my license and registration. So Eric said he decided to take me up on what I said. So he said: God, I don't know how to pray. I don't know how this works. If you really exist, could you get me out of this? He said: Rich, you have to understand that my entire life I have never been let off by a police officer. I'm the kind of guy that they drag out of the car and throw up against the hood. I don't know, maybe it's my face or something. But they never let me off!

So Eric said: God, if you are really there, will you let me off? The police officer came back to the car and his whole demeanor had changed. He was really nice. He said: Hey, listen. I'm just going to let you off this time. Just watch your speed. Eric said he just drove away stunned. He thought: Am I in touch with God?

And then there is the approach of power evangelism.

The approach of power evangelism

Power evangelism is God bringing to an individual a sense of his reality through a healing, or a deliverance – some sign or wonder that opens the door to faith in Christ. Now, the book of Acts is structured along the lines of power evangelism stories. In the book of Acts, Jesus tells the disciples that the gospel is going to radiate out from Jerusalem. From Acts 1-Acts 11 what we see is these progressively larger ripples from Jerusalem, the gospel being propelled out in ever-larger concentric circles. And what causes the gospel to go from Jerusalem to Judea; and then from Judea to Samaria; then from Samaria to the ends of the earth is power evangelism – people being opened up to faith in Christ by their experience of the power of God.

One illustration among many in the book of Acts is found in Acts 9.

Acts 9:32-35

As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. 34 "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat." Immediately Aeneas got up. 35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Aeneas is healed by the power of Jesus and that experience of God's power opens the door for people to put their faith in Jesus.

Craig Heselton, who is the executive pastor here at the Vineyard and who has been a leader in our church for many years, used to be a plant manager of a chemical company

here in town. While he was serving in that capacity, he had an employee, a director of research, whose wife was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Craig went over and offered to pray for her. The director of research was not Christian and neither was his wife. They initially declined the offer. Her doctors put her on taxol, but her chemotherapy wasn't working and she was given a 14% chance of surviving.

Things were getting more and more desperate and Craig offered to pray for her again. This time the couple accepted Craig's offer. Craig prayed for this director's wife and prior to praying for her, he explained to her something about healing and about Jesus and she actually accepted Jesus before they prayed. So Craig prayed for her from that time on and her tumor reduced and finally she was cancer free a few months later. She is still cancer free to this day.

Her husband, who worked with Craig, and who had his Ph.D. in chemistry actually didn't become a believer then. He and his wife began attending the Vineyard. He sat in church every week. Both he and his wife would weep through the service. About six months later, after his wife was declared completely cancer free, he gave his life to the Lord as well.

Power evangelism.

A young attorney went to one of our Christian conferences called Breathe. It is the summer conference that we do for young adults. This young attorney was an alcoholic. She used to walk around all day with a gigantic cup of coke mixed with vodka and sip on it all day long. While she was at the conference, she went through a demonic deliverance which opened up her life to receive the gospel message.

It is the experience of the power of God through dreams, visions, healings, and deliverances that is a bridge now in the Muslim world for thousands and thousands of Muslims to place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. And throughout Christian history I could point to instance after instance where individuals and sometimes whole tribes and people groups turn to Christ because of their experience of the reality of God through a prophecy, through answered prayer, and through dramatic healing.

And then there is what I call the approach of entrepreneurship.

The approach of entrepreneurship

And I'm using the term entrepreneur not as someone who is simply creating a business. I'm using it to speak about the entrepreneurial spirit of innovation and creativity. It is the Christian who is risk taking, who is willing to start something new, to forge new ground. It could be in business, or it in the arts, or in academics, or in any area.

Let me work this approach out in sharing our faith. You know, all that we have – our intelligence, our money, our opportunities – its all been to us by God. Here is what we read in 1 Corinthians 4:7,

1 Corinthians 4:7

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

According to the Bible, there are no self made men or women. Our lives, our education, our health, our teachers, the people who have influenced us along the way – it is all gift.

God's provision

One of the areas that the Bible speaks about gifting is in the arts. Christians often restrict the subject of spiritual gifts to things like prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, the gift of leadership, the gift of administration. But the Bible has a very broad view of gifts. And one of the gifts that God gives is the gift of artistic ability, craftsmanship, the capacity to make beautiful things. Here is what we read in Ex. 31,

Exodus 31:1-5

Then the Lord said to Moses, 2 “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts.

When you hear a beautiful work of music, or see an amazing painting, or an architectural masterpiece, when you look at a well-crafted piece of furniture, or a beautifully made piece of jewelry, or you watch a great film – it is all gifts from God. These things are all pointers to the artistic ability of the Lord.

We know that artistic gifts can be perverted.

The world's perversion

In the very next chapter of the book of Exodus, we see the gifts of craftsmanship perverted in an idolatrous way. And so we read in Exodus 32:1-4 these words:

Exodus 32:1-4

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.” 2 Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” 3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. 4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

Brothers and sisters, we look around at the perversion of artistic gifts every day. Photography and film making has turned to pornography. One of the most wicked uses of film and the arts is for the purpose of propaganda. The Nazis employed Leni Riefenstahl to make one of the most demonic movies ever made, *The Triumph of the Will*. She glorified the Nuremberg rallies and the leadership of Adolph Hitler.

Music is reduced to violence of misogyny, the irritating hatred of women. We see self indulgence and blasphemy. It is not hard to find examples of God's artistic gifts being perverted so that these gifts no longer function as pointers to God and reasons to give thanks to him.

Throughout the ages, sincere followers of Jesus have taken different approaches to dealing with the perversion they've encountered in the arts. One of the approaches that we particularly see among evangelical Christians in the 20th century is the approach of protest.

We protest

20 years ago when Martin Scorsese put out his film *The Last Temptation of Christ* in which he portrayed Jesus as a tormented figure struggling with his identity and place in history. There was a firestorm of evangelical protests. Thousands and thousands of Christians marched; they blocked theatres. The approach of protest was advocated by Christians all the way back to the third century and the early church father, Tertullian, who cautioned Christians against going to the theatre, getting involved in the worldly arts. And this whole tradition has basically been followed by evangelical Christians in the last century. Evangelicals have, by and large, avoided the arts. We are the demographic that attends museums the least, that goes to concerts the least, pays attention to artistic trends the least.

That, by the way, is out of sync with most of Christian history. For most of Christian history, the church has been the patron of the arts. It was the church that by and large paid for and commissioned many of the great medieval and renaissance paintings and much of what we call classical music.

And then we have the approach of parroting.

We parrot

Some Christians say what we need to do is have our own Christian version of art. We will have Christian rock bands, and Christian literature, and Christian movies. The unfortunate thing about the alternative system is that a lot of Christian art is really of a very low quality. The *Left Behind* series truly left behind literary merit or production values in the film. A lot of Christian art and music is, frankly, pretty embarrassing.

There is a third approach. It is the approach that Jesus urges upon us as his followers. It is the approach of permeation.

We permeate

We read in Matthew 5:13-16,

Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

What Jesus is saying is that my followers are as necessary to the health of the world as salt and light. The world needs Christians in order to be healthy. We constantly look out at the world and say: What’s the matter with people. What’s wrong with the folks in Iran or in Kosovo or in the Sudan? Why are people doing such terrible things?

Jesus says that the question is not what’s wrong with these folks. The question is where are the Christians? Why have so few Christians chosen to be missionaries to Muslim countries and Muslim areas? Why do churches spend so little on missions? I’ve told you this before, but we Americans spend more money on dog food each year than we spend on missions. If something is wrong in the world, we need to ask: Where’s the salt? Where’s the light?

We look at Hollywood and we followers of Jesus complain about the violence and gratuitous sexuality, the obvious pro-abortion or pro-premarital or extramarital sex message in so many movies. What’s wrong with Hollywood is the wrong question. The right question is where are the Christians? Where is the influence of the followers of Jesus acting as salt and light?

It is the nature of meat to rot without salt. And it is the nature of the world to become perverted and more rotten without the influence of followers of Jesus. Just take the film industry in America right now. the Screen Actors Guild, which is the premier union that represents actors, includes more than 100,000 members. And even by the most generous estimates, publicly identifiable followers of Jesus represent less and 1% of that figure. There are more Christian writers, directors, and producers, but even they constitute a very small segment of the industry.

We followers of Jesus just don’t seem to get it in terms of how decisions are made in America.

We think that decisions in America are primarily made by politics. That if you grab the lever of power and get your person in office, that will change things.

Many years ago, a Christian philosopher named Frances Schaeffer rightly told us that culture is upstream from politics.

Unless followers of Jesus permeate the culture, the arts, entertainment, academia, journalism, we won't be able to influence public opinion. And it is public opinion that moves politics. See, it is politicians who put their finger up in the wind to see where the wind is blowing. We Christians need to change the direction of the wind. That's how you make things change.

There are some people who are getting this. In the movie industry there is a Christian named Philip Anschutz, who is a multibillionaire who made his money in oil drilling and started a telecommunications company named Qwest. Philip Anschutz's passion is to permeate Hollywood and through the entertainment industry change the culture. He started a production company called Walden Films and has produced movies with incredible production values; not cheesy, parroted Christian movies, but movies that have artistic merit that reach the culture; movies like *Ray* and *The Narnia Chronicles*.

Barbara Nicolisi, a former nun, directs Act One which is a faith-based non-profit in Hollywood. She has a program for aspiring film and television writers, and another program for entertainment executives. She believes that there is no way to change America without changing the culture. And so hundreds of young adults are being trained to be the future executives in Hollywood who make the decisions about what's going to be produced, what you and your children are going to be watching. They are making decisions about what values are going to come through in film and TV.

There are folks like Makoto Fujimura, who is a brilliant young Japanese American artist. His work is shown all over the world. He is a follower of Jesus. And as a follower of Jesus, who is also a brilliant artist, he has been able to permeate the arts community with salt.

You see the same types of things in academia. God gives gifts. The gifts in many communities have been perverted. Universities were perverted into anti-God, anti-Christian values messages, so what did Christians do? We followed the same track and protested. They said: Hey! We're not going to allow our young people to go to secular universities. You need to avoid biology departments. You need to avoid philosophy departments. You need to avoid women's studies departments. We'll set up our own schools and our own version of biology, of philosophy.

But then there are some followers of Jesus who said: No, that's not the major strategy of Jesus. The major strategy of Jesus of reaching this world is permeation. The salt has got to get into the meat. The light has got to get into the darkness. And we're seeing more and more arenas in which followers of Jesus are permeating the culture.

You know, in philosophy right now, Christian philosophers are respected not as a separate discipline, but as great philosophers in the broader discipline of philosophy,

the former head of the Philosophical Association was an evangelical Christian. Imagine if in the social scientists, in psychology and sociology, anthropology and the liberal arts, in English and history, political science and the sciences, women's studies and journalism, in the Academic Journals – those institutions were run by Christians. That the heads of departments at major universities, deans of major schools were followers of Jesus.

There are folks who are thinking strategically. One follower of Jesus named Dennis Bakke has set up an initiative called Harvey Fellowships. What these fellowships are is that for followers of Jesus who are going to top five programs – in law, business, medicine, liberal arts – this wealthy family will pay for Christian education. So that we find in 10-20 years followers of Jesus permeating the ivory towers of this country.

There are reasons to hope. The Chaplain at Harvard said that there has been no time since probably the 17th century have there been more evangelicals attending Harvard University than today. That is a hopeful sign.

And in business, more and more followers of Jesus have both created companies with thoroughly Christian ethos – companies like Chick-Fil-A, Service Master. These are companies that have in their mission statement that the purpose of the business is to give glory to God. Christian ethos dominates these companies. But also Christian businessmen and women who have reached places of influence so that a Christian mind is at work in corporate decisions.

If you are interested in this kind of thing, there is a wonderful new book out called *“Faith in the Halls of Power”* by Michael Lindsay. Michael Lindsay interviewed 360 influential Christians in politics, the arts, entertainment, business – folks like Ralph Larsen, who ran *Johnson and Johnson* for years. He was their CEO. Because he was a follower of Jesus, he led *Johnson and Johnson* away from a corporate decision to make the morning after pill that would induce abortions. He said: How can we, who are the baby company, make a pill that would kill babies, even if it was profitable?

Christian influence. It was a Christian female executive named Sherron Watkins, who blew the whistle on Enron. She became *Time Magazine's* Person of the Year in 2002. Her Christian faith caused her to put herself, her career, her future on the line to expose corporate corruption.

Permeation.

And then there are many, many people in the arts, academics, business, athletics, sports, who use their particular occupation and position as a platform for sharing their Christian faith.

Friends, it doesn't matter if you are a plumber, a police officer, a school teacher, a shift supervisor at McDonalds, clean houses for a living, or work at a local Wal-Mart. It doesn't matter what your job is, God has given you a platform for sharing your faith.

We build a platform

You are able to uniquely reach people because of the place God has put you for Jesus Christ. Let me close with this.

If you are a follower of Jesus, God wants you to point people around you to Christ. There is no situation you could ever find yourself in where that situation can't be an opportunity for pointing people to Christ. Let me finish with this story.

There is a man in our congregation, who I will call Daniel, who on New Year's Eve began to experience some numbness in his right arm. He felt like his arm just fell asleep. It happened a day or two later and after 3-4 days, he made a doctor's appointment. The doctor thought it would be a good idea for him to see a neurologist. So he set up an appointment. But the next day the numbness began traveling up his body to his chest and neck and he found himself having a hard time breathing. So he went to the ER and they did a CAT scan. They discovered that Daniel had a massive brain tumor – a stage 4 brain tumor.

He was immediately scheduled for brain surgery and they removed this huge tumor in his brain. Just last week, Daniel went in for a second surgery and some of our pastors visited him. Here is what he said: My preference, of course, is to be healed. But through the course of the conversation, the pastor said he was totally others-focused. He said: "You have to understand, my cancer has given me the most incredible opportunities to share my Christian faith with all my colleagues."

His colleagues visit him in the hospital and Daniel has seen his cancer as an opportunity to just go for it in terms of sharing his faith, who he is and why he does the things he does, and why he still is able to have hope both for this life and the next. Daniel and his wife just kept saying over and over again that they firmly believe that God has given them an awesome opportunity through this cancer and he is going to take full advantage of it.

It reminds me of the apostle Paul in prison. The enemy thought he could shut Paul off by putting him in prison. Daniel is using the platform of cancer. You can use the platform of fixing someone's car; teaching in a public school; of running your own business; working in a daycare center. Whatever situation you ever find yourself in, friends, if you are a follower of Jesus, and you have eyes to see it, God will give you the ability to share your faith according to your S.H.A.P.E. Let's pray.

Sharing Your Faith According To Your S.H.A.P.E. — Part 2

Rich Nathan

February 23-24, 2008

How a Christian G.R.O.W.S. (Spiritual Growth Series)

Matthew 5:13-16

I. There is not one size that fits all

II. The approach of power evangelism

A. The approach of prophetic evangelism
(Jn. 4.16-19; 39-41; 1 Cor. 14.24, 25)

B. The approach of prayer evangelism (Ps. 34.8)

C. The approach of power evangelism (Acts 9.32-34)

III. The approach of entrepreneurship (in the Arts, Academics, and Business)

A. God's provision (Ex. 31)

B. The world's perversion (Ex. 32)

C. Christian responses

1. We protest

2. We parrot

3. We permeate (Mt. 5.13)

4. We build a platform (Mt. 5.14-16)