

“Every Christian an Evangelist”
Mark 5:1–20; John 1:35–42; John 4:16–19, 25–30, 39–42
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We will be talking about the idea of how every Christian ought to be an evangelist in this study, where they are talking to non-Christians about what it means to be a Christian and sharing the Gospel. Briarwood Church is a unique church, blessed in many ways, not a perfect church and has a great legacy. Part of this legacy is that this church in many ways was really founded on personal evangelism with the Barkers and many others sharing their faith that has trickled down even to today. Many times with a blessing there comes a burden of being faithful for to whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48).

I praise the Lord for those who feel they are being faithful in evangelism and so as we go through this study perhaps you can be thinking of those you are discipling and mentoring because those are people you are to be training up in this area. Our theme this year at the church is a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. Statistics show that the vast majority of people who claim to be born again, Bible believing, evangelical Christians do not regularly share their faith and many rarely ever do it. So in this study I want to look at some of those prominent excuses people tend to make about not sharing their faith.

I work for a ministry where one of the main things we do is share our faith but we also teach people to share their faith and there are some common excuses out there which we will look at in this study. Mark 5 is the first story that we will look at.

Mark 5:1–20 says [1] *They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. [2] And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. [3] He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, [4] for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. [5] Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. [6] And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. [7] And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” [8] For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” [9] And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” [10] And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. [11] Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, [12] and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” [13] So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.*

[14] The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. [15] And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. [16] And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. [17] And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. [18] As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. [19] And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” [20] And he

went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

This is a strange story to our ears even if we have heard it a lot in church because it doesn't seem to be something we would see every day. This other side of the sea would have been the area of town that every good Jewish mother would have told her Jewish son not to ever go over there. Here Jesus starts to disciple these men and tells them to hop in the boat to take them on a short-term mission trip across the lake. The Disciples were probably kind of cowering in fear for they don't speak at all and all of their fears were confirmed.

The first man they see when they get to the other side, is insane, naked, running around and someone had tried to bind him with chains but he snapped them apart because he has super human strength. He is cutting himself with stones, bleeding and he is possessed by a couple thousand demons. Jesus ends up casting the demons out into the pigs and the people are like 'what is the deal with the pigs?' We don't know for sure but I think possibly the reason it's in there is to show us two things. One is how many demons there really were and two how powerful and destructive they were. If these demons had stayed in this man's life this was the end he was headed for, utter destruction. He was going to go off into the abyss of hell and not just off some cliff.

The man is saved, clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus. He is listening and learning to Him and people see what happened to him. These people go back into town to tell others what happened and everyone comes out and their response is to tell Jesus to leave immediately. Probably the reason for them saying this was they are thinking Jesus just ruined their economy. We had a pretty good thing going selling pigs and it has just been wrecked. This would be similar to someone owning a car lot and someone came and blew up all your cars, all your inventory. These people are angry.

Here is side note. It's not the most important thing I want you to think about but it could be important for some of us. Sometimes when Christ starts to draw near to your life and maybe there is conviction in one area of your life, a prayer we are tempted to pray subtly in the back of our heart and mind is 'Hey God would You just leave me alone. It's just one little area of my life, one little pet sin so just leave me alone.' I would be very careful about praying prayers like that because God just might give you what you want and walk away.

Jesus did. He left these people. It is pretty terrifying to think about but He didn't totally leave them because the demon-possessed guy kind of says to Jesus 'This is kind of weird spot for me now. Not only do I have a terrible reputation but I was kind of a part of wrecking their economy. So is there any change You have a 13th spot in the boat or an opening in Your 'D' group because I'd really like to sign up now. I'll be a very committed disciple.' Jesus says 'No, I want you to go back home to the people that knew you and tell what great things the Lord has done for you, how He has had mercy on you.' The man does it and people marvel.

Probably the most common excuse I've heard of why professing believers don't share the Gospel at all or very regularly is 'I don't know enough.' This would include things like 'I don't have enough verses memorized' or 'I don't have enough cool illustrations' or 'I'm too young.' If anyone could have made that excuse legitimately it would have been this crazy, demon possessed man, right? The best case scenario is that he has only been a convert for 2 hours, sitting at the feet of Jesus soaking it up. That's pretty awesome, right? Then Jesus says 'Time is up, I have to leave and I want you to be an evangelist in these 10 cities.' And he does it.

I primarily do evangelism on college campuses. I have one fraternity at Samford University that I spend the most time with. Every year there are about 2 or 3 guys that will want

to talk to me personally after I have done a Bible study because they think because I'm leading a Bible study then I know more than all their fraternity brothers put together. Generally speaking I'm really the last person they want to talk to and there are generally more of them but they just don't say anything. They think I'm old and that it's weird that I go to college campuses. They generally go to college to get away from Bible studies but if they had a fraternity brother that used to run around and party with them and that guy has recently been converted they will often times feel more comfortable talking to that guy rather than to me.

Generally most people feel more comfortable talking to someone their own age about their faith than someone they honestly think might not be able to relate to where they are in life. Unfortunately many will say 'I just don't know what to say' when someone their own age might be interested in hearing the Gospel but I guarantee you probably knew more than this demon-possessed man knew. God can use you. Don't despise the day of small beginnings (Zechariah 4:10) in your life and what the Lord might be willing to do through you.

Let's look at another excuse as we look at John 1. Some people are probably thinking that if they had a testimony like the demon-possessed man that they could sell tickets to that testimony. Meet the guy who was possessed by a couple thousand demons and he will tell you what Jesus did for him. I'd buy tickets to that. In fact, that sounds better than most movies playing right now. Some are thinking if they just had a cool testimony then they could be a better evangelists but they think they have a boring testimony. They would say they grew up in a church, didn't really do anything sinful, maybe stole someone's bubble gum but that would be the extent of their testimony or so they think. Honestly, I'm praying that all my kids have boring testimonies. In the long run that's the best kind.

Sometimes we think that can preclude us from evangelism if we don't have some radical testimony. They think if I don't have lots of sex, drugs and rock and roll then they can't share the Gospel and that's not true. Let's look at John 1:35-42 which says [35] *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. [38] Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" [39] He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. [40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*

Here Andrew is already a religious guy. He probably grew up in church and he is a part of John the Baptist's (a Prophet) discipleship group. When Jesus comes on the scene this Prophet points to Jesus which is what he is supposed to do and says 'He's the Lamb of God for He is the One who can take away your sins.' Andrew leaves to follow Jesus and gets to spend the whole day with Him. The next day the first thing he does is he goes and tells his big brother Peter. There is some speculation here but I feel it is safe speculation that Andrew could have easily said 'I don't feel very gifted' and that's the second most common excuse I hear from people who say they can't share the Gospel.

Typically people never make that excuse in a vacuum. It's generally 'I'm not as gifted as so and so' or 'I don't have the gift of gab like they do' and I think Andrew could have certainly felt this way when compared to Peter because when you read through the Gospels we don't hear

much from Andrew. He gets like two speaking parts in the Bible, like one sentence and other than that we don't hear much about him in the Bible. Whereas Peter literally speaks over 100 times in the Gospels and it seems he is always speaking at the right time, the wrong time or any time. He is famous for saying a lot of stupid stuff and that's why many of us can identify with him, right?

Peter also preached a lot of good stuff for he is the one that preached at Pentecost and 3,000 people get saved. Every time you find Peter if he is not sinning then he is preaching a sermon. He is kind of like Babe Ruth where he was either hitting home runs or striking out and that was Peter in ministry. Imagine the intimidation Andrew might have felt being Peter's younger brother plus Peter was probably Andrew's boss in the fishing business they had.

I am the oldest of five children and big brothers don't tend to like to be instructed by younger siblings. That almost always doesn't go over well when the younger brother might say 'Let me instruct you older brother on something I know more about than you.' It takes gigantic Holy Spirit experience to deal with that one well. Yet Andrew had such an experience with Christ that he said 'I have to go talk about this.' He could have made an excuse saying 'I'm not as gifted as Peter and Peter won't listen to me because he never listens to me. He doesn't listen to anyone because he is talking all the time.' Andrew went anyway and it changed his life.

Let's look at John 4 which contains perhaps the third most common excuse. This is a familiar story to most but we're only going to look at a small part of this. The context is that Jesus is weary from His journey and goes through a town that is part of Samaria. Jews in general hated Samaritans and the feeling was mutual. Self-righteous uppity Jews wouldn't even travel through Samaria and they would take a long detour where they might even have to cross the Jordan River twice just to keep themselves ritually clean. Not Jesus, for He isn't afraid of getting dirty. Jesus sits at this well where He will have a conversation with a very scandalous woman who has a terrible reputation. We will pick up in the middle of the conversation as Jesus is sharing the Gospel with her.

John 4:16–18 says [16] *Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."* [17] *The woman answered him, "I have no husband."* *Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18]for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."*

I want to try and put this in some context. Think about America today and how sexually anything goes. If you happen to know someone with five divorces there is probably a little bit of stigma today attached to that but rewind 2,000 years ago in a hyper-conservative, hyper-traditional, hyper-patriarchal society and if you have had five divorces, now being shackled up with a sixth guy you were considered the scum of the earth. Back then this woman could not have initiated any of these divorces for she had been used and abused and taken advantage of. Essentially what she is doing now is swapping sex for rent. It would have been very easy for her to have felt so much shame and think 'who would ever listen to me?'

Look at the powerful impact Christ is going to have on her life. Now let's look at John 4:25–30, 36–42 which says [25] *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* [26] *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

[27] *Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"* [28] *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who*

told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him.

[36] Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. [37] For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' [38] I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

[39] Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." [40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. [41] And many more believed because of his word. [42] They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Jesus is basically saying to His Disciples that He did the hard part. I came into the middle of town, sat down with this scandalous woman, where you all would not have touched her with a ten foot pole, had the hard conversation with her, she went back and told all the men in town and now they are all coming back to hear so you all have low hanging fruit. Evangelism is about to be super easy for you because I did the hard part. Many of these people come back and they are saved.

The bottom line here is that God can use anybody to effectively do evangelism. There is even a story in the Old Testament where Balaam, a prophet, gets rebuked by a donkey, the animal and not just somebody who acted like a donkey. If God can use a donkey then He can use me and you but we have to be willing. So let's think about some points of applications on this.

Let's say you're reading this and you don't know if you have ever fully trusted Christ then my question is 'why would you wait?' Why not trust in such a powerful Savior that could set you free from whatever you are oppressed by and forgive you of all of your scandalous sin no matter how full of shame you are?

So let's take those who are believers who might use some of these excuses to not evangelize or do it as often as they should. I'm not saying you need to share the Gospel with everyone you meet and talk with but I would ask you to start by praying for one person. Who is one person – a friend, family member, someone you work with or go to school with, a neighbor – where you could start speaking to them about Christ and what He has done for you even if you don't feel very gifted or respected or don't know very much.

Even though these are probably the three top excuses people tend to make when it comes to why they don't share the Gospel as much as they should, I don't think it's the main reason. I say this because I put myself in that category. I'm a little embarrassed to say that because I work for a ministry called Campus Outreach. The whole point is evangelism. I don't feel like I'm always as faithful as I should be in evangelism. Sometimes I am and sometimes I'm not.

The times I am not then why is it? None of these three reason apply to me for I can't say that I don't know enough because I went to seminary. I can't really say I'm not gifted enough because I do talk a lot. I can't say I'm not respected enough because I work with college students and they kind of have to be nice and respect me because I'm older. When I look deep into my own heart I would have to say I'm not sacrificial enough.

I really think that the reason most hold back in the area of evangelism is we don't like the sacrifice that comes along with it. We have a nice friendship and we think if we have to cross this line of social awkwardness to talk with them about Christ and what He has done in our life then it might ruin the friendship. This could be so even with a stranger. Sometimes when I'm on

a plane, sitting next to someone, I'm generally tired and don't feel like getting into a long conversation. It's just selfish. Or what if I do share the Gospel with them and they are not interested, then I have to sit next to them for the next three hours and it's really awkward. There is such a selfishness that we have.

I have a good friend named Shane. Shane had grown up in the church and claimed to be a Christian but when he went to college he was playing football and led a very wild, sinful life. Other football players shared the Gospel with him and eventually Shane became a Christian. Shane had a younger brother named Seth and they were very good friends. Shane knew Seth wasn't a Christian and went home to share the Gospel with Seth. Seth was dating a girl and they were in a very sinful relationship. When Seth heard the Gospel he understood that he needed to end this relationship with this girl but he didn't want to let this relationship go. Shane loved him and kept persevering with the Gospel with Seth and eventually Seth said 'don't bring this up again! I love this girl, I'm going to marry her and I'm sick of hearing this Gospel.' It really ruined Shane and Seth's relationship because they quit speaking to each other for a while.

Seth did become a Christian later and is now in full time ministry. After Seth became a Christian he went back to Shane and said 'Man, what made you continue to persevere in sharing the Gospel with me even when I was being stubborn, belligerent and kind of stiff-arming you verbally and relationally?' Shane said 'I love you enough to lose you.' I loved you enough eternally to lose you in the short run.

I really started walking with Christ when I was in High School, the summer before my sophomore year. My life radically changed. Most of my friends were not Christians and most were those wild, crazy party animals. I did share the Gospel with some of them but I was very reluctant many times. The thing I would say when not wanting to share the Gospel 'Is I'm a good friend and I don't want to ruin the friendship' as if I would say that I love them so much. I don't want to hurt them or offend them. It slowly started to dawn on me that I wasn't really loving them well. If I really loved them then I would do whatever it took to share the Gospel with them. I'm loving myself in some kind of self-centered way. I'm loving my social comfort. I don't want to lose cool points.

Max Stiles is a church planter in Dubai. He has this great quote; 'Most Christians around the world don't share the Gospel because they fear the raised fist' or you may say the raised machete because they fear persecution, yet he goes on to say 'but we in America fear the raised eyebrow.' Someone may look at us funny or laugh at us or make a joke behind us and that would be the end of the universe for us. I think that is the deepest reason we are not sacrificial enough.

What is underneath that? Let's look back at our three examples. Think of the crazy, demon possessed man walking back into town. Think about the social ridicule that he likely ran into at first coming into the town. He could have heard things like 'Hey, there is crazy, naked guy! He's coming back because he wants to be a preacher now.' Think about Andrew and Peter's relationship. We don't know much about Andrew but we know a lot about Peter. Peter is the one we see in this account from Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:15–17, 21–23 says [15] *He (Jesus) said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"* [16] *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* [17] *And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."*

[21] *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third*

day be raised. [22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." [23] But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Peter tried to rebuke Jesus. Have you ever wondered why Jesus rebuked Peter so harshly by responding to him, 'Get behind Me Satan!?' I think Jesus knew Peter was so hard headed that if He didn't say something really harsh he would not listen.

Remember Peter the night before Jesus went to the cross. This was a somber, solemn, serious moment and Jesus basically tells Peter that He needs to level with him. Luke 22:31–34 says [31] "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*" [33] Peter said to him, "*Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.*" [34] Jesus said, "*I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.*" Jesus basically tells Peter that They (the Trinity) have given Satan this permission and he will fall. Jesus is going to pray for him but it will get really ugly before it's over.

Can you imagine if Jesus told you what He just told Peter? What might happen in the pit of your stomach? Peter thinks he can do this but thinks the other Disciples will probably fail this test. This is the man that Andrew had to screw up his boldness to go talk to that Peter, but he did it.

Now try to put yourselves in the shoes of that scandalous woman, in that culture, over two thousand years ago. She had five divorces and was living with the sixth one. None of the women will talk to her and that's why she was all alone at the well. The only people she could get an audience with were the men and the way she started sharing her testimony was by saying 'Come and see a *Man* who told me everything I've ever done.' Basically she is saying 'I've met a new man.' Imagine the laughs she would have heard from that. 'We imagine you did meet a new man because you're always meeting a new man' yet they came to see. All she had to offer them was shame and sin.

I was reading a commentator on this who said 'she went out of town that day, a specimen of impurity, and she came back that day a teacher of evangelical truth.' All it takes is one encounter with Jesus Christ to radically change the worst sinner into an effective evangelist. She reached the whole town with her testimony.

So why is it that many of us are not sacrificial enough with our time, with our social relationships, to be willing to share the Gospel with others? We're not amazed enough at God's grace. What was it that helped these three people get over the hump in their heart and be willing to sacrifice and put up with whatever social ridicule they might get? They had just had a real encounter with Jesus Christ.

Imagine how shocked the demoniac would have been to be restored. He knew he should have been in an insane asylum. Who gets free from thousands of demons? He could have been killed just like the pigs that were thrown into the sea from those demons and Jesus chose him. Andrew is just the quiet guy in the back of the room and he just got to hang out with Jesus, God in the flesh, all day. The woman at the well – no other man would touch her unless he wanted to use her. God in the flesh just sat down and had a personal conversation with her about her soul.

I think they were all so shocked, stunned, and overwhelmed by the saving grace of God that it made them say 'I can't wait to share the Gospel with someone else' and not out of sense of

burden or duty but out of a sense of overflowing joy because of the mercy that Christ had, had on them. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I pray for all reading this that there would be a sense of conviction. I pray for every believer reading this that You would lay someone on our hearts specifically that You would like us to share the Gospel with and that You would give us the boldness and the willingness to speak up. I pray, Father, that it would not come out of a bare minimum sense of duty but that it would come out of grateful, humble sense of awe of how good You have been to us personally. Please make that a reality in our hearts this day. I do pray if there is anyone reading this that is not a Christian that You would be drawing them to Christ for we pray all this in Christ's Name, Amen.

Power Point

INTRO

I. I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH—MARK 5:1–20

II. I'M NOT GIFTED ENOUGH—JOHN 1:35–42

III. I'M NOT RESPECTED ENOUGH—JOHN 4:16–19, .25–30, 39–42