



SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Evangelism, people, Gospel, conversation, God, Lizzie, practice, Ben, easy, Jesus, questions, talking, world, save, Christian, Power.

Kevin Palau 00:03

This is the City Gospel Movements podcast where we have conversations about church unity, serving cities and sharing the Good News.

Ben Jack & Lizzie Burke 00:16

You're listening to Exploring Evangelism Myths a collaborative podcast series by City Gospel Movements and Advance. We're your hosts. I'm Lizzie Burke in Portland, Oregon. And I'm Ben Jack in Manchester, England. Join us as we explore five common myths that hold people back from sharing their faith.

Ben Jack 00:36

Today we're talking about the myth, evangelism should be easy and to kick us off, Lizzie, tell me a story.

Lizzie Burke 00:42

Yes, a story from college. So, this was years ago, when I went to a-not just a Christian college, I went to a Bible College. So, I studied church leadership and Bible and theology. And I had a couple friends who said, "Hey, Lizzie, we're going to go to this Christian art conference this weekend, you want to come?" And I thought, sure, like, I'm not doing anything. And it's at a local church, I'll come. And so I go, and it's kind of one of those typical Christian conferences. There's like, worship music, and it's like, indie type style Christian music because we're in Portland, Oregon, right? And the there's this amazing- I still remember the sermon that was preached that day it was an amazing sermon on First Corinthians 13. And then it gets to lunchtime. And they say, okay, you're gonna go out, find a spot in Portland to eat, which is going to be undoubtedly good. And you're gonna have a Gospel conversation with somebody.

Ben Jack 01:34

Oh, okay.

Lizzie Burke 01:36

Like, in lunchtime, we have like an hour. And I'm like, are you kidding me? I look at my friends. And I'm like, did you know it was this type of Christian conference?

Ben Jack 01:45

Was that like, out of the blue? Were you expecting anything like that to happen?

Lizzie Burke 01:48



Totally out of the blue, I thought we were going to be talking to believers who are poets and painters, and it was that and then all of a sudden, they're like, okay, for lunch, you're going to go out and have a Gospel conversation. I was like, I did not sign up for this. And so, we go out the doors of the church, and we're in the heart of the city. So there are streets, you know, everything street parking, and I see—you know, people walking on the streets, and they weren't a part of the conference, or whatever. And I'm just automatically looking at them like targets. And there's this pressure that just floods over me like, Oh, my gosh, am I missing opportunities? Maybe it's that person. Maybe it's that person. And I thought I did not look at people this way when I came to the conference, why all of a sudden is there this flip, you know? And so, we get in the car, and we are about to drive to some lunch spot. And I see this woman walking her dog on the side of the road.

Ben Jack 02:41

Uh oh.

Lizzie Burke 02:42

Yeah, mhum, uh oh for her. And so we start driving. And I tell my friend, like, stop, stop the car. And he stops it. And I opened the door and I jump out of the car. And I just kind of like jog-walk up to this woman, which in a city, you don't do that anyways, you don't jump out a car and kind of scurry over to people. That's weird. But-

Ben Jack 03:06

Unless you try to kidnap them, I guess.

Lizzie Burke 03:07

Yeah, unless you're trying to force the Gospel conversation. Anyway, so I get up to her. And I'm like, hey, Miss, can I talk to you? And it was so it's so awkward. Ben, I don't even want to tell her response. Because this is like a bad example. It's like I should not be telling people on a podcast to follow my example on this one.

Ben Jack 03:30

So you were presented with the opportunity to go share your faith with somebody and it brought on instead of feelings of joy and excitement, feelings of anxiety that led you to this scenario that you don't even want to tell us the ending of.

Lizzie Burke 03:42

Yeah, utter terror and frustration with my friends. And just that feeling like, Oh, I'm at a Christian event, and then all this pressure to share my faith and rush it and all that other stuff.

Ben Jack 03:55

And what was the vibe of like the people around you? Did you get the sense that like other people, when they heard this invitation to spend their lunch time evangelizing Portland. Did you get the sense that people were like, Oh, great, yeah, this is a great opportunity. Or do you—did you get the sense that other people were feeling the same way that you were?



Lizzie Burke 04:10

You know, I don't know if it's trauma? That I think back on this. And remember, silence. But I don't remember any, like gleeful conversations about Oh, yay, I love doing this. It was more like, everybody's like, Oh, yeah, we're totally enjoying this conference. And then that like feeling in your throat, like, Oh, I don't want to talk. Do you feel as awkward as I feel? So, it was-I don't know, I didn't get that vibe that people were feeling very excited or willing to do this?

Ben Jack 04:40

Well, it's interesting isn't it, because we're talking today about this kind of myth that a lot of people think that evangelism should be easy, and yet when they're presented with an opportunity, and admittedly, in your situation, it was a little bit sudden, and surprising. But even when people have foreknowledge that they're going to be doing this in the foreseeable future. Generally, it can induce the same feelings that you felt of anxiety. So, if, if there's a feeling that-that it should be an easy task, and yet people are feeling the way that you were feeling on that day, then something must be amiss here. Well, I want to reassure you Lizzie that you're not the only person that feels the way that you felt on that day, take a listen to some of these clips.

Guest #1 05:18

We're all called to do it. But I guess sometimes it can be quite toxic and anxiety inducing. And I don't think that's how it's meant to be.

Guest #2 05:27

If it were easier for me, I would be more effective. And the fact that it isn't easy, is daunting. I don't want to screw up. It's too precious and important.

Guest #3 05:38

I don't know how I'm not good enough. I don't have it figured out. I just yelled at my kid yesterday. You know, just kind of false things that shouldn't be barriers, but I think certainly are for people.

Guest #4 05:52

It's fears-fear. I'm gonna do this wrong, I don't mess it up. I'm telling the wrong thing. I'm gonna look stupid. They're going to reject me, you know, all that really basic stuff.

Lizzie Burke 06:03

Okay, I definitely hear the words anxiety, and fear, and I don't want to mess it up in those quotes. And that was a lot of what I was feeling in that moment. And I know, I'm not the only one who feels like evangelism should be easy. And then when presented with an opportunity or thinking about a future opportunity start to feel anxious. And so why does this myth exist? Ben, I think a great place to start is first defining evangelism because oftentimes, we're afraid of things because we don't really know what we're talking about. And there's this ominous, ambiguous thing. But when we define it, I think a lot of the fear can start to unravel. So let's define evangelism right now, Ben.



Ben Jack 06:44

Well, I think a good definition for us to work with is that evangelism is the Holy Spirit empowered proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world in the hope that they might accept the forgiveness of God and be reconciled to him today and forevermore. And that kind of helps us to get our head around this idea that evangelism is not actually about our activity, primarily, it's about who God is, what he's done in the person of Jesus Christ, his life, his ministry, his death, his resurrection, even his ascension and return which are often parts that don't feature in our contemporary evangelism. But we need the whole story to make sense of everything that's going on. And then the role of the Holy Spirit, empowering us today to go and take that message into the world so that the world could know by the saving work of Jesus restore relationship with our Heavenly Father for-for all eternity, that that we'd be reconciled back to his love today and forevermore. So, if we get our heads around that kind of understanding of evangelism, maybe we can start to make some headway in dealing with people's fears and anxieties around doing it.

Lizzie Burke 07:44

Yeah, you know, we keep using this definition in this series, and we will continue to and I think the thing that's so encouraging to me is, it's the Holy Spirit empowered proclamation of the good news. And in that moment, at that conference, I was thinking, evangelism is Lizzie trying to save people in her own power, convincing them to believe things they don't want to believe or care about believing? And that is not at all what we're talking about by evangelism. But that's what I was thinking in the moment. And that's why I felt this pressure because I thought the saving was on me. So yeah, that's why it really seems so hard in the moment.

Ben Jack 08:20

Yeah, I imagined there's probably a bunch of reasons why it felt hard. Can you think of anything else that was kind of playing on your mind during that time?

Lizzie Burke 08:27

Oh, definitely. I mean, I was with two friends. And so a lot of it was fear about what they're going to think about me or-

Ben Jack 08:34

Okay.

Lizzie Burke 08:34

you know, like, how am I going to look not only to them, but to total strangers? Am I going to come across as somebody who can't hold a conversation? Am I going to make them feel awkward? And I definitely didn't feel equipped to it. I felt like I was on my heels when the opportunity was presented to go and share the Gospel. And there was a lot of pressure, like somebody was saying in the quotes that I don't want to mess this up. If this is somebody's only interaction with a Christian for some time, if this is the picture they get of Christians, that's a lot of pressure, and I don't want them leaving with a bad taste in their mouth.



Ben Jack 09:10

Right, exactly. So, I mean, I think it's perfectly understandable why a myth like this would exist that evangelism should be easy, because we think of it as being something that God is involved with, and, and that it should be a fairly natural thing for us to explain God to the world and if we were in genuine relationship with God, that that relationship would come through our lives and, and impact the people around us. So, you can kind of see the genesis of why a myth like this would exist, but as you're quite correctly pointing out, it's so much more complex once you involve real human beings, all of their insecurities and all of their frailties and weaknesses and challenges.

Lizzie Burke 09:45

I totally agree. And I know that a lot of you listeners are saying, hey, some of those fears or anxieties or that pressure resonates with you and let's talk about if we believe that evangelism should be easy. What is the problem with believing this myth? And I think the first thing that comes up when I think about the problem with believing evangelism should be easy. Is we began to question if we really love Jesus, if evangelism is hard, and-

Ben Jack 10:14

Right.

Lizzie Burke 10:15

That's like, extra pressure, right Ben?

Ben Jack 10:18

Yeah.

Lizzie Burke 10:18

You know, it's like, wait, no, I really do believe I love Jesus. And I want to honor him with my life. And I want to obey His command to share the Gospel. But evangelism feels awkward at best and impossible and utter terror at worst, you know, and this is precious. Evangelism is precious. And I just want to encourage listeners and speak to myself to that. If evangelism is hard for you, it doesn't mean you don't love Jesus, you love Jesus. And it hurts when-when you get rejected, and it hurts when people reject Jesus because you love Him. And so it is, it is a really personal thing. But we just want to say that if evangelism is hard for you, and you feel like it should be easy, that doesn't mean you don't love Jesus.

Ben Jack 11:02

No, not at all. And-and of course, that is, such an easy way for the enemy to sneak his way in and whisper in your ear that, you know, you're deficient, and you're not good enough, and that this, that and the other end, and we start to kind of reason with his lies, and let them become reasonable to us. And that's a big, big, big problem. Because the Lord doesn't want you to see evangelism as something that will crush your faith, it's actually fulfilling a huge part of the identity of what your faith is a follower of Jesus is to be, the Great Commission is not merely a command to be obeyed, but a promise of the true fulfillment of life that will follow as you follow Jesus, it's a beautiful promise of, of just what you can become in being the light of the world and bringing hope where there is no hope and peace, where



there is no hope. And, and it's so sad when people have an idea of evangelism has been well-it should be easy, because I'm a Christian and I should be able to do and like you say, Lizzie, is not easy for people. And so they then start second guessing their faith, it clearly there's nothing wrong with evangelism. So if I'm not good at evangelism, there must be something wrong with me. And then people start, you know, having all sorts of challenges psychologically and faith wise, and, and it's a real problem. And, and so we need to come up with some solutions to help people navigate and journey through that.

Lizzie Burke 12:21

You know, another problem with believing the myth of evangelism should be easy is, if it's hard, we don't practice evangelism, we simply say, Well, I'm not going to, to get into that. And we stick to things that are easy, or they're comfortable, or they're more acceptable. So we're going to pray, we're going to read the Bible. We're going to keep it internal. But we're not going to practice. And that's something that I think holds us back from experiencing the promise you were talking about Ben.

Ben Jack 12:47

Yeah, totally. And-and practice should be a really important part of, of so much of our Christian life, there are many things that we are going to want to practice to grow in our development. And like, like the Bible is a good example of that, like most people that come to the Bible don't instantly have like, perfect understanding of the Word, we, we read it, and we think about it, and we talk about it. And we check with what other writers have read. And most crucially of all, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us read it and illuminate it to us in new ways. But, that actually, as we go, we kind of learn to read the Bible just by doing it. And so it is with evangelism. But the nice thing is we don't just have to learn on the job with evangelism. We can, we can practice together, we can get alongside each other and do some roleplay, and things like that. But if you think that it should be easy, like you say, Lizzie, then you're probably never going to think about practicing it. And then when it is hard, you just disqualify yourself. And it brings all sorts of problems. There's kind of like a self repeating cycle. The solution is to practice, but because you've entrenched yourself in this myth that it should be easy. You don't bother practicing. And then you compound the problem ever further.

Lizzie Burke 13:50

Definitely. And one of my favorite authors right now is a woman named Dr. Carol Dweck. And she wrote a book probably many of you listeners have read called Growth Mindset. And she has this great quote that I think applies to this conversation. She says, "just because some people can do something with little or no training, it doesn't mean that others can't do it. And sometimes do it even better. With training or practice" like we're talking about. You know, I think we do see people who maybe over years of having Gospel conversations with people seem natural, and it comes easily to them, but probably because they've had a lot of Gospel conversations. And then (yeah), those who, you know, have a proclivity toward evangelism, or some may say, the gifting, and that's fantastic, but they still need to practice to you know, and you actually may have the gift of evangelism and through practice, realize it. So, you know, I just think the idea that evangelism should be easy can hold us back from doing the very thing that can make us better at sharing the Gospel and more natural not only for us, but for those who are in the conversation with us. So, I got to have a great conversation. With Dr. Jerry Root from



Wheaton College, and he teaches evangelism and is just a fantastic storyteller. And I sat down with him asking him about this idea that evangelism should be easy. And he encouraged me and other listeners to practice evangelism. But he learned this the hard way. And I want you to listen to this story because I think we can gain a lot from it.

Dr. Jerry Root 15:24

Each of us have different gifts, that's an aptitude and a proclivity to move in that particular direction. So, if I have the gift of hospitality, I do my evangelism around the table. If I have the gift of service, I get my toolbox and I go fix people's cars in my neighborhood or maybe they're-help them with their roof or help them you know, with their plumbing, and I do my evangelism around my toolbox. If I have the gift of giving maybe I find out who the neighbors are that are out of work, especially in the Coronavirus, era, and I and I pay their electric bill that month, and I do my evangelism out of that kind of magnanimity. So, it's not that evangelism is directed only for those with the gift. Those with the gifts of the easy proclivity towards it. I think if you don't have the gift, you can gain a proclivity. But the gained proclivity is through practice. (And learning skills through making mistakes).

Lizzie Burke 16:17

Uhum, that's good. So one thing that you told us when we were dialoguing about this podcast is evangelism is hard. But it doesn't have to be. And with a little training and willingness to learn, it can become as natural as breathing. And I want you to give us a picture of what a evangelism that is as natural as breathing. What does that look like?

Dr. Jerry Root 16:40

Oh, well, let me let me tell you through a mistake, I learn through my mistakes as we should. I mean, many ways, like, let's say, a person asked me a question, and I'm absolutely clueless. That doesn't end the conversation. I can say, well, that's a really good question. I go dig for answers. And I go back to that person. And I say, you know, that question you asked the other day, I thought it was really a good one. And it intrigued me, and I've been digging and, let me show you what I found. You matter to me. That's why I dug, it was worth looking because you matter. And let me show you what I found, and a discussion opens up. Well, anyway, I was in Southern Cal years ago. And I thought I need to talk to people about Jesus. I was a youth pastor at the time. And most of the people I was working with were Christians, I have to go out and find the non-Christians. So, I decide I go to a donut shop. And I went to the donut shop and I thought, I'll talk to people at the donut shop I showed up at about 10 o'clock. Nobody's at donut shops at 10 o'clock. Maybe the odd policeman might stop by for a donut and a cup of coffee. You want to go to donut shops and reach people you got to show up at six in the morning. Stopping by on their way to work between six and eight. So I go this donut shop and I think you could write a doctoral dissertation in sociology on the subcultures of donut shops in America. Every time I went the same people sitting at the same little tables and chairs, you know, and I had no strategy. I was utterly stupid. But I was willing. So, here's my strategy. This is this is not for everybody. And it probably was a bad one for me. I thought I'd show up, read my Greek Bible. Somebody would come in and say what's that? And I'd say it's a Greek New Testament. They say, Oh, can I ask Jesus in my heart? I mean, that's how stupid-(inaudible). Oh, well, anyway, when people walk in, I'm fairly extroverted. So, I would just say, Oh, hi, hi. hi. hi. I'd say hi to them. People didn't respond much. And I'm praying for the



donut shop. It was very much part of my prayer. There's this one guy look like Walter Matthau. He's a guy played in grumpy old men. He's the guy looked like he was either weaned on a dill pickle or baptized and lemon juice, you know, (Lizzie: Oh, my goodness!) he sat on the table next to me by himself. And every time he came in, I'd say hi to him, and you just give me a scowl and go sit down. One day I got caught up in reading my Greek Bible. And all of a sudden, I hear this voice. "Can I sit here?" And I look up at the grumpy guy. And I looked over at his table. Somebody came in and didn't know the rules of the donut shop and sat at his table. (Lizzie: Yeah!) I said, "Sir, sit down. What's your name?" He said, "Jean." "So what do you do for a living Jean?" And He says "Why? are you writing a book?" And I realized I went too, too deep, too fast. And I realized there has to be a way that you go about this, where you're understanding the etiquette of what it's like to meet somebody new out in the open and stuff like that. But Jean started sitting with me. I'd go Tuesdays and Thursdays. Every Tuesday, Thursday, he started sitting with me. I began to know his life. Twice divorce, no clue where his former wives were, two kids no clue where his kids were. Ever heard of a deadbeat dad? This was the guy. And guess what, God loves deadbeat dads but who's going to be in their world to reach them? Nine months, Jean came to Jesus. But I learned in that time- then we started then we started doing follow up stuff, and so on. I learned in that time, there's an appropriate way to go about this, you can ask a public question, what's your name? That's fair. If you meet a person in a town, you can say to them, are you from this town? It's the public question there in the town. And this is the answer. Once I was in Chicago, and I met a guy. So, I said, "what's your name?" He said, "Peter". I said, "Peter, are you from Chicago?" He said, "No, I grew up in Albuquerque. But when my parents divorced, when I was 12, I moved to Chicago with my father." He didn't have to tell me that. He's probably been throwing it out for years, and nobody picks up on it. And so, I was given permission by him in his answer, that I could ask questions about what he gave me. That's learning. And I think as you go deeper with the person, you find out, eventually, we're God's already tugging at the heart. So, you're not just throwing the Gospel out there, like shooting a shotgun. You're finding out where the deep-felt need is. And then when you share the Gospel, you connect that feature of the Gospel with that place where the deep don't need is.

Ben Jack 20:59

That was a great conversation, Lizzie, what was probably the biggest takeaway for you in that?

Lizzie Burke 21:04

Well, I love Jerry's humility and almost humor with himself just recognizing, Okay, first, I made it really awkward. Like, I think he said, stupid, or I was an idiot, like, what was I thinking?

Ben Jack 21:15

(Humorous laugh) Right!

Lizzie Burke 21:16

And if I just lay my Bible out at a coffee shop, or a donut shop, in this case, that somebody is going to want to become a Christian! That doesn't really happen!

Ben Jack 21:24



His greek Bible as well! He's Greek New Testament, of all things.

Lizzie Burke 21:26

That's right! And I just think, you know, like, okay, even the story I told at the beginning of this, which I will finish, and I'll tell you how it ended. But I think acknowledging, okay, in the past, I made some conversations pretty awkward, I didn't have the best way to go about it, but I'm still going to practice and over time, he stuck with it, and saw that the Gospel is powerful. And even if he can-he's awkward, he's willing. And God still wants to save this guy. And so I just, I really appreciated his persistence and his almost humor just to say, you know what? yep! That didn't work in the beginning, but I'm gonna stick with it.

Ben Jack 22:06

Yeah, and sticking with it is such a vital part of the process. Because another problem that can come from entrenching yourself in this myth is that you end up being a bit apathetic or you let your insecurities get the better of you and cause you to be inactive. And of course, we were talking about this in the last episode, when we were reflecting on whether evangelism is best done by the professional or the pastor and-and that when we do think about that as being the truth, again, we can become a bit apathetic and, and it's amazing how many of these myths actually that we're talking about in this series can lead you to a place of apathy. And in many ways, the greatest danger of a good portion of these myths is apathy. Because apathy will lead you to inactivity. And if we're inactive, how will the world hear the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Lizzie Burke 22:51

Yeah. So where do we go from here? You know, we've talked about the myth we've talked about what's the problem with believing this myth? But what are practical ways that evangelism? Yeah, there are always reasons for it to be hard. There are always reasons for us to kind of feel a little bit anxious or awkward, but it can be easier. So, here's how. And I think the first thing we need to talk about is knowing God's role in evangelism, and knowing our role. What do you want to say about this, Ben?

Ben Jack 23:17

Well, I probably should have put a spoiler alert on the comments I made at the start of the podcast, because they kind of gave the game away right at the top of this thing that, when we're thinking about, like, the definition of evangelism, that, you know, it's the Holy Spirit empowered proclamation of the Gospel, that-that tells us what we need to know about God's role in the task that without his empowerment, we are just going into the world making noise, and it's essentially marketing, but we don't want to market God, we actually want to give a powerful demonstration, in word and deed of who he is. And so I want to take it seriously when Paul says in Romans 1:16, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel for it's the power of God to bring salvation to all who believe" The power of salvation belongs to God exclusively. I can't save anybody. You can't save anybody. And it is good that we can't save anybody because then it would hinge on what side of bed I got out of, you know, on any given day. If had a good night's sleep, you know, lots of people getting saved, if I had a bad night's sleep is like, nah, you're alright right. I'm not gonna save anybody today. Or someone cuts me up on the highway, on the freeway. Whatever strange words you guys use over there, what we call motorways. Then-then you



know, I'm like, Oh, great. well, you might be getting where you want to go a little bit quicker today, sir. But you're also going to hell because I'm not gonna save you.

Lizzie Burke 24:30

Okay Ben!

Ben Jack 24:31

Right?! Exactly! So-because we-we're so driven by our emotion and so driven by our frailty and our insecurity and, that if we had the power of salvation, man, the world would be in trouble. Fortunately, power of salvation belongs to an all powerful, all good, all loving God who is the same yesterday, today and forever and who desires for none to perish. And, he's made the way by which none need to.

Lizzie Burke 24:54

Yes, so good. And so, you know, I think for me, it's helpful to really simplify it, you know, God's role is to save. He is the one who convicts in our role is to tell what God has done, even if we're afraid. And you know, I think one of the most encouraging passages of the Bible to me that just shouts empathy is in Mark 16:4-8, where Jesus, he's out of the tomb, and women go and see his tomb, he's gone an angel says, Go ahead, go tell his disciples.

Ben Jack 25:30

Yeah.

Lizzie Burke 25:30

Go tell Jesus disciples that he's risen. And what do they do? They don't tell anyone because they're afraid. That's what the scripture says. And so I think, you know, even from the beginning, people have been afraid to speak out about what God has done. But we're in good company, because even then, you know, a couple books later in Acts. Paul is proclaiming the Gospel boldly, clearly, fearlessly, you know, so it's possible. And I think we just need to practice tell what God has done in your life. Know, there will always be reasons for it to be hard, and for us to be full of anxiety, but God will empower you and our role is to simply to tell what he has done.

Ben Jack 26:13

Yeah, I find it so fascinating reading the Gospel accounts, because you see, these disciples go on such a journey of being men who are very cowardly in a lot of ways and a little bit dense, not always super smart, quite slow to catch on. And every time that they reveal themselves to be a little bit cowardly, a little bit prideful, a little bit failure orientated. It makes their eventual transformation into full on Gospel ninjas. All the more impressive. And, and let me tell you, it didn't happen by their own initiative. It happens by God's initiative, His Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, and nothing is the same ever again. And the men and women who then, go from that place to transform the world in his power. And it doesn't mean that they're not still afraid, do we? Do we really believe that the disciples never experienced fear? The majority of them, according to church tradition, were martyred for their faith except for John, it looks like they were all killed at a younger age than natural causes in horrible, horrific ways. Do you really think that they wouldn't have been some level of fear in some way, as-as that was



happening? I'm sure they experienced in different ways, but what sustained them? A complete trust in who Jesus is, out of a complete empowerment by His Holy Spirit. And so that's the same for us today? Do we really think that Jesus is who we believe him to be? Will we let His Holy Spirit empower us to move beyond our fear and declare the truth of who he is to a world who so desperately needs to hear it? And as we do that, we can trust God to do what only God will do and bring dead hearts to life?

Lizzie Burke 27:46

Yes, so if you're afraid, and there's an opportunity to share the Gospel, or you want to have a conversation with a friend or family member, admit that fear and just pray God, Holy Spirit, empower me right now. I know it's your power, not mine.

Ben Jack 28:00

Yeah. But I also like the biblical principle of not doing it on your own as well. And I think that's something that we neglect in our evangelism, we kind of think that we have to be Lone Ranger's and just go and do it on our own. But even-it's a bit cheesy, but even the Lone Ranger had a buddy, right? He had his sidekick, and he had a nice horse as well, to help him along the way. So, he had multiple helps. And it's like, we have to help with the Holy Spirit, which is the most important helper, but also, we should be going with other brothers and sisters in Christ. And I think, you know, the majority of your evangelism really should be done with others.

Lizzie Burke 28:31

Yes. Okay. So there's always a reason for evangelism to be hard. But it can be easier through knowing God's role in our role, and then also practice. And we talk about first practicing the presence of God. So being in a secret place with God, allowing him to speak over you who you are, and who he is. And we have this amazing quote from a woman named Caitlin, who describes what practicing the presence of God looks like in her life.

Guest #5 28:58

I've seen that oftentimes, what's interesting is, I think there's a lot of programs or different methods that are used or talked about for sharing the Gospel or that are taught by leaders. I think of even things like in my time, like the EvangeCube and being given that in my church and-and being walked through, here's how you open, you know the EvangeCube or share like the Romans road. And, so I think for me, personally, what I've seen is that the more people are genuinely being themselves, and being comfortable in their own identity and personality, and their own intimacy with God, and coming from a place of experience in intimacy with God, using who they are, in their personality, it's going to be the most genuine and comfortable for them. And really, for whoever they're in conversation with, you know, that will feel I think, more natural than necessarily just doing a program or way that-a method that maybe is more systematic rather than relational.

Ben Jack 30:03

Yeah, ultimately, Lizzie This is about devotion. It's about giving ourselves the opportunity to come into the presence of God. And to let his empowering work transform us day by day, by day, to become more the people that we were always supposed to be. So, I think practicing the presence of God is it's not for



evangelism, it's for a whole walk with God, the fruit of which I think will be evangelistic witnessing to the world.

Lizzie Burke 30:30

Yeah. Good. Okay. Second, practice praying. So, Ben, I know that when you encourage people to have gospel conversations, you don't necessarily say go have a gospel conversation, but you say, hey, go walk the streets and offer to pray for people. And why do you kind of choose that route? rather than go have a gospel conversation?

Ben Jack 30:49

Well, for a bunch of reasons, I mean, one, because the obvious one, I believe that prayer is, is the power is the foundation of our evangelism, that we would go in the power of God and ask God to do what only He can do. But I think too, because when you actually send somebody out to prayer walk the streets, not only you, as a person inviting God to have His way across these streets and in these houses and amongst these people. But you're also then taking the time to wander around and expose yourself to who's out and about, and you might cross paths with somebody who might stop and and ask you, "Hey, how are you?" And you have a little conversation. They might even say to you, what are you doing? You say, "oh, I am there prayer, walking the streets." That happens to me a lot when I'm prayer, walking the streets in my neighborhood, or wherever I've chosen to go, and you have a nice conversation with somebody, maybe I've got my dog with me as well. And I'm walking the dog and somebody wants to pet the dog. And they're having a nice walk. Yeah, actually, I'm not just walking the dog. And I'm prayer walking, hey, well, I'm here. Can I pray for you? Is there anything you'd like prayer for. And sure, people can be a little bit like, Oh, I wasn't expecting I was just expecting to pat your nice little doggy. But it opens up a dialog for, for Christian faith and gospel opportunity, it opens up the opportunity to pray for them and give a demonstration of God's power through that moment. And, look, even if you don't end up having a conversation with anybody on that day, the very fact that you've been walking around praying will have an impact on you and your heart. And over time, you will stop being satisfied, I see this happen all the time, you'll stop being satisfied with just prayer walking and not talking to anybody. And over time, you'll actually be like, I really won't actually talk to somebody while I'm prayer walking and, and maybe even offer to pray for them. Because your heart will change. So for me, it's a it's a it's a better way to go. And it's something that I really encourage as much as possible.

Lizzie Burke 32:31

Definitely. So Dr. Root, Jerry root, talked about practicing evangelism and the audio clip you heard earlier, which was fantastic, you know, just start having conversations. And another thing that we want to encourage, is practice role playing gospel conversations with another Christian. I mean, this is really simple and helps you kind of in a really safe, comfortable environment, step outside of your comfort zone just a little bit by having role playing conversation. So get together with a friend, maybe through your small group, and start asking questions some of your friends might ask, when you're talking about Jesus talking about church talking about Christianity, and ask each other questions and see, you know, what responses come to mind? And maybe, if there are certain areas where you realize, Oh, I need to do a little bit more study of this. I need to think more on this. Pray more on this. That's a great space for those areas to be revealed. And you're in really good company.



Ben Jack 33:29

Yeah, totally. The practices is such an important part of it, I think we feel a bit weird about practicing, it seems almost like is a bit insincere to kind of practice a conversation that you then go and robotically regurgitate on somebody out there. And it's like, No, it's not that you're necessarily going to go in word for word, then repeat that same conversation that you had when you practiced with somebody, and then you go and repeat that with, with somebody out in the world. It's, it's just practicing for the kinds of questions that could come your way because most of the struggles that people have or where they feel like they've been put on the back foot, and they don't quite know how to respond to someone's question or objection or accusation, even if they're a bit more aggressive, which-to just encourage people in my 20 years of being an evangelist, that the amount of times that people have been hostile and aggressive towards me, whenever evangelize are few and far between, most of the time, if people aren't interested, they're just disinterested, and they just kind of carry on. But it can just be so helpful through practicing to just ease some of our responses of what we would say, if certain things came up. And if certain questions will raise, how might we help people and I like to say that practice doesn't necessarily make perfect, but it does help us to bring clarity to the one who is perfect, so that they may know him.

Lizzie Burke 34:50

That's good. And finally practice talking and asking good questions. And it does kind of connect to the role playing conversation because I think the, the question that people who are maybe considering Christianity or searching for God, are actually pretty different than the questions they were asking maybe 20 years ago. And I think that's why we wanted to partially have this series because we recognize that a lot of people see evangelism strategies being used that are 20 years old. And they're not necessarily meeting the questions that people are asking these days when they're considering God, it may not be like, how do I get to heaven or hell? But how do I know who I really am? Or instead of what are the right things to do? What's right, what's wrong? Maybe, how do I find community? And so these different questions change over time, the ones that people are asking, but I think through practice, talking, and asking good questions, we can start to really discern what are the questions your culture is asking what are the questions people in our cities are asking? And how do we respond to those with an answer based in the Scripture, based in the Gospel?

Ben Jack 36:00

I like this, I think this is really good advice, the idea of knowing God's role, and knowing our role is essential. And of course, that all that ultimately ties into is how well do we understand the gospel itself, the more deeply you understand the gospel, the more simply and clearly you'll be able to articulate that, and actually knowing the gospel will help with so many of the evangelistic challenges that you face, and then practice, like what we've been talking about and all the different ways but I think if I was going to add one more kind of bit of advice to this mix, it would be to, to encourage us all to tell more stories of our evangelism, which I guess kind of presupposes that we're engaging in some evangelism but but whatever evangelism we're engaging in, are we actually been telling stories? And what I mean by that Lizzie is not just the success stories, or the so called success stories. Oh, yeah, I spoke somebody on the bus and the whole bus got saved and revival broke out on the bus. It was amazing. It's like, well, sure. That's amazing, that's great. But what about the stories where you spoke to many, and it, and it



didn't go as well as you hoped it would? And yet the authenticity of that story might encourage somebody else. That Oh, yeah, well, that happened to me, too. So maybe I'm not totally on the wrong track. Maybe this is just something that happens from time to time.

Lizzie Burke 37:08

Yes. And that's kind of why I want to finish my story. Because, honestly, I know other people can relate to that feeling of an awkward conversation. And the idea that I'm still going for it, I'm still wanting to get better at sharing the gospel and having conversations about Jesus hopefully inspires and encourages other people who have maybe had some other awkward moments.

Ben Jack 37:30

Yeah, well, let's not waste any time. Why don't you share that story with us?

Lizzie Burke 37:34

Okay, so I think where I left off, was I kind of jumped out of the car, and jogged up to the summit and said, Hey, "Miss, can I talk to you?" And she turned around with her dog, and kind of like, took a couple steps back like, oh, like, shocked. And she's like, "No, no, thank you". And then like, walked away. And then I'm like, Oh, my gosh, like, could have gone any worse. I didn't even have a conversation, this woman was afraid of me. And I get back in the car. And my, my two friends who are sitting in the front, they're like, quiet. You know, you asked Ben, how are other people at the conference responding? My friends were totally quiet. And they said, "Oh, well, you know, good job." Did you see what happened? Anyway, so we drive to go to this lunch spot. And at this point, how conference works is everybody gets released at the same time, I guess, pre COVID, right. Everybody gets released at the same time. And so you're at like five different lunch spots. And they're like 1000, people who are just coming down on these lunch spots. So they're kind of overwhelmed with people, you don't know who went to the conference, you don't know who's just going out to lunch and not a believer or whatever. And so the time is kind of winding down after we ate. And my friends who didn't really step out or have a conversation with somebody said, "Oh, wait a second" as we're walking out the door, one of them like turns around and starts trying to have a conversation with somebody in the lunch spot. And it was so rushed, and it felt so forced, like I needed to check a box. But anyway (Ben: yeah), he felt pressured. I think he started have-try to have a conversation. It was really short. And then he came back, we ended up going back to the conference, but it just felt like there has to be a better way. And maybe our understanding of evangelism isn't quite right, because I don't want to repeat this over and over again. So yeah, you know, that was a really awkward situation, but it's stuck in my memory. And since then, I think it really taught me Okay, first of all, I think because I felt it was so awkward yet deep down in my heart. I know I want people to know Jesus (Ben: exactly) I am committed to this process. Like there's a better way. So, what is that? And I think over time, it's for me look like not rushing, creating space for conversation rather than me just monologuing and also listening to the Holy Spirit for where there are open doors, open hearts, and sharing more there, rather than feeling like, I need to make something happen today. Like, I want to be open to opportunities every day. Yeah, but it also want to discern, okay, is this person ready? And how can I share the gospel in a way that meets them today? Thing is, Lizzie that this story that you've told is actually for many people going to be more helpful than if you just say, and I went, and I spoke to the woman and both her and her dog got saved. It was a remarkable



moment of salvation, you know? Okay, great, good for you. You know, and, and it's exciting. And we give thanks to God for what happened. But sometimes people can't identify with the so-called success stories, because they haven't seen that play out in their own activity they've had the experiences that you had, where it didn't go so well, the difference between you and they might be that for them, they fall into the trap of apathy and insecurity. But for you, by the grace of God, you're able to actually go, Okay, I got two choices here. I either get defeated by this and just retreat into myself and never step out with the gospel again, or I use this as a spurt. And what is the most important thing here, not my comfort, but that I want people to get saved. So I'm going to partner with God in what God's doing, and I want to get better. So let me think about it. Let me debrief myself, let me reflect. And, you know, we could talk about whether it was the most helpful way of them sending you out, we could talk about whether you'd ever had a suitable amount of evangelism training in your church over the years. These are all valid questions to think about. But ultimately, the most important question is this. Do we have a good enough understanding of who God is, and what he's done? That we know how important it is for us to take that good news into the world. And even when it goes wrong, and feels like the hardest thing in the world, that we don't just run away? But we stop and reflect and go, well, "God, that sucked." (Lizzie: Yes, but-) I want to keep going. I want to keep going for you. So, help me to learn help me to grow and buy your spirits power, will you keep me going. For me, Lizzy, It's actually not about whether evangelism is easy or hard. It's about whether evangelism is costly or not. And I think true evangelism will always be costly in some way, shape, or form. Yes. And that reframed my idea about this myth, when you told me it's not about whether it's easy or hard, but about whether it's costly. And you've, you know, you've given your life to be an evangelist, you've been a an evangelist for 20 years, vocationally, and what cost? Has that meant in your life, Ben?

Ben Jack 42:48

I mean, yeah, there's been all sorts of costs to that you have dreams and ambitions when you're growing up of things that you'd like to do. And, you know, what I wanted to pursue at college and the career that I wanted to follow from there, is something that I haven't pursued, because I felt the call of God on my life around 17, at the age of 17, to go into the into the ministry and to become an evangelist, and to outwork that, and that has meant that I've not always lived, where I would have chosen to live, God has, you know, moved me to a specific place, it's meant that I've-lets think materialistically I've earned a lot less money doing this than I could earn. If I was doing other things I, I've lived away from my parents who I am very close to you. And I've been away from them for, you know, a couple decades now, basically, because of the calling of the ministry. But here's the thing, these are such minuet costs to pay, to, first of all, pursue the call, the joyful, wonderful call of God and be in the sweet spot of what God actually wants you to do. And second of all, such a small price to pay to help people meet Jesus and know him today and forevermore, not because of my power or ability, but simply because God is asking you the question, Are you willing and available to be part of what I'm doing in the world? And I don't need your skill set or your expertise. All I need is your posture. What's your posture? And if your posture is a posture of I'm on my knees before you God out, and I'm willing, and I'm available, I'm weak, but I'm prepared to be used by you. And guess what? God can do? Absolutely, anything with that.

Lizzie Burke 44:16



Yes, so as we sum it up, it's not the cost of evangelism is the cost of discipleship. And evangelism is a key component of discipleship. So even if it feels hard, if it feels easy for you, if you're somewhere in between if you've gotten discouraged or apathetic or insecure about it, evangelism is worth it. And it's a key part of discipleship. And so, we just want to encourage you, if you believe evangelism should be easy, but it's been really hard for you keep pressing in because the promise of the gospel is worth experiencing and seeing transformation in other people's lives.

Kaedyn Lashway 44:54

Hey, this is Kaedyn Lashway from the City Gospel Movements team. We created discussion questions for each episode for personal reflection or to use as a small group, you can download this guide for free at evangelismmyths.com or click the link in the episode description.

Kevin Palau 45:13

Thank you for listening to another episode of the City Gospel Movements podcast, a ministry of the Luis Palau Association, you can subscribe to our podcast on Apple, Spotify, and Google Play. Leave us a review or reach out to us on social media to keep the conversation going. You can find us on Instagram and Facebook at City gospel movements.

Lizzie Burke 45:32

We'd like to give a special thanks to the Luis Palau Association team to Joy Bongiorno for producing this episode. Kevin Palau for your radio voice intro. Stephanie Wieber You're the boss. No literally, Spencer Reed for listening to hours of interviews and being a Google Doc ninja and Kaedyn Lashway for running the show and telling us what sounds good and what doesn't. From the message trust. Shout out to Peter Thompson for responding to emails quicker than Ben Jack and for not getting fired. And finally, this series would have not happened without our interviewees, Charlie, Jonathan, Caitlin, Paul, Christine, Jim, Rob, Marissa, Lydia, Manny, Sally and Bruce. Thank you.

