
Subject: Divorce, Remarriage and the Church
Posted by [william](#) on Wed, 01 Feb 2006 05:03:59 GMT
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Here is an article that I wrote concerning this issue. perhaps it will provoke some thought!
Comments welcome.

Evangelism Sunday

Evangelistic! Yes, that's what we are! Preachers everywhere encourage Christians to evangelize, to spread the good news and compel others to join their group. A typical example:

Scene One-

After listening to the Sunday message, John was convinced that he should be more active in bringing others into their small congregation. He realized that he had been selfish in keeping such great Bible teaching to himself. Their pastor was a godly man and effective in teaching the word. This particular Sunday he preached on Mk. 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature..." John had never considered that he should be involved in evangelism but on this day he knew that this verse was speaking directly to his heart.

That afternoon he decided that he was going to make a difference. He started by witnessing to the waitress at the diner. He explained the good news to her (in between her customers) and to his surprise she received Jesus as her Lord and Savior! He asked her to accompany his family to church that evening, and she agreed.

When he arrived, John was overjoyed to find that her whole family had decided to join them! He overlooked the fact that she was wearing pants and had pierced ears, but almost fainted when he saw that her son had an earring!

The pastor was pleased that his congregation had taken his message to heart for there were many new people in the evening service, in fact, there were over 30 new faces! He was running a little behind schedule but John had insisted on introducing the waitress and her family.

After brief formalities, the woman asked if she might speak with him privately for a moment. The pastor guided her into a corner and she began to pour out her life's story. He had often marvelled at how people would open up to him, a total stranger. He assumed that it was because they felt comfortable knowing that a minister of the Gospel wouldn't betray their confidence. As the time grew near for him to speak, he grew impatient and started to excuse himself, but something she was saying caused him to become very attentive.

"My first marriage ended in disaster," she said, "but Rex has been a very good husband to me,

even though he isn't a Christian". She went on about the kids, but he interrupted her because the meeting was starting. He promised to continue the conversation later and rushed to the front.

The pastor's thoughts were jumbled and the message that he had prepared seemed out of place, especially with all of the new people. He closed his eyes and asked God for direction and the courage to speak the uncompromising word. Picking up his notes, he spied a copy of Jonathan Edwards's Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God that he had been reading earlier and suddenly he knew what he was going to do!

He scanned the audience while the offering was being taken and was shocked to see at least three women whose hair was shorter than his own, complete with sideburns! Another woman's true hair color was beginning to show (at the roots) and then there was this man, or was it a woman? He couldn't tell because of the shoulder length hair! Humph!

Well, one by one, the points of his message (like Paul's "Now Concerning..." in Corinthians) begin to fall into place.

He stepped into the pulpit with his first point -- divorce and remarriage. He didn't move on until he was sure that everyone in the building knew for a certainty that remarriage was nothing more than a nice term for adultery (unless, of course, the first spouse had died).

Next on the list was --worldly clothing. He had a particular disdain for the current popularity of baggy pants and announced that the trend was a sign of rebellion in the youth culture.

Hair issues were next with careful attention paid to the headcovering. He went on and on about long hair for women, until he remembered Mrs. Canton, a faithful member, who had suffered severe hair loss due to a medical condition, so he moved on to the men. He carefully avoided the trap of legalism by refusing to state exactly how long was too long, but he made it clear that he instinctively knew when it was too long.

On to the next point, the wearing of jewelry. The last time he had raised this issue, several of the women had brought their old jewels and donated them to the church.

They sold the stuff and used the money to replace the old steeple and re-carpet the whole church!

Make-up was the next on the agenda and he tried to be as tactful as possible but it was obvious that all of the new women had succumbed to the influence of Jezebel. One woman even got up to leave when the issue was raised. She caused quite a commotion when her high-heeled shoe got caught in the floor vent. Even God must have a sense of humor, he thought!

When he finished he gave an alter call to which 3 or 4 responded. He then offered a closing

prayer.

After the service, John came up and congratulated the pastor for "preaching the uncompromising word". He told the pastor that since last Sunday's sermon he had been feeling that the Lord was calling him to be an evangelist. The phrase "...travel land and sea to win one proselyte..." played over and over in his mind and he knew for a certainty that this was what he wanted to do.

The midweek service brought with it a return to normalcy. Most of the regular crowd were there but only a couple of the "newbies" had returned. The pastor's message dealt with the "narrow way" and the fact that only a "few find it".

After the message John came up and reminded the pastor that, while many had followed Jesus, when the going got tough they all left Him. The pastor said, "That's right, only the twelve remained, and even they were shaky at the end."

John, furtively glancing around the room, whispered, "Yep, and one of them was a devil!"

As they walked out together, John suggested that they make last Sunday an annual event and call it -- Evangelism Sunday! "Great idea," said the pastor, "we'll do it!"

Scene Two-

The whole week was a blur to Rex, the husband of the waitress. He and his wife had hardly spoken since that evening service. He had always tried to be a good husband but their twenty year marriage had long since grown stale and he felt that at the age of forty-three life was passing him by. He longed to be young again and experience some of the things he had missed.

His newly acquired motorcycle had partly restored his zest for life. As he tooled down the highway listening to his favorite song BORN TO BE WILD, the things that the pastor said kept coming into his mind. Could it be that God didn't approve of their marriage? According to the pastor, the last twenty years was nothing more than an adulterous relationship that left four illegitimate children in its wake.

Rex had never taken Christianity seriously although he did believe that there was somebody watching over this old planet. He (or maybe She) must certainly be amused by the daily soap opera of human existence!

Rex had wanted very much to attend the midweek service at the church and talk to the pastor further about this matter of divorce and remarriage, but his job hadn't permitted it. However, just thinking about the possibilities of getting a second chance with someone new was almost too good to be true!

The marriage to Sue Ellen had been his first but since she had been married before it was as if he had never been married! Yes, a new life! The pastor had talked about a "new life" and it certainly fit as the refrain "born to be wild" played in his ears.

He determined to make an appointment with the pastor and talk about this further in the next day or so.

Scene Three-

Sue Ellen had not been able to focus on her duties as a waitress since that eventful Sunday. She had experienced the gamut of emotions that day. When the gentleman had prayed for her she felt waves of electricity washing over her and for the first time in her life the burden of guilt was gone! Even Rex and the children had noticed the difference.

However, her joy was quickly replaced by worry after attending the evening service. In fact, the burden of guilt had returned as the pastor spoke and now she felt overwhelmed and had, for the first time in her life, contemplated suicide as the only way out of this tangled web. Almost everything the pastor had said applied directly to her and the condemnation was squeezing her to the point of making it hard to breathe.

Scene Four-

It had been fifteen years since Sue Ellen had attended the meeting that changed the course of her life.

She had tried to conform to the standards that the pastor had set forth but after a few weeks of outward conformity she gave up trying. She had often considered suicide as her only option. Rex had insisted on getting the divorce so that he could get on with his life. He said it was only a formality anyway, their marriage wasn't valid in the sight of God. The night he had told her about the divorce, she had gotten into her car and wandered aimlessly for hours.

She had thought that God had forgiven her for her past sins but the pastor said that repentance alone wasn't enough in this case. He said that the word "to repent" actually means "to turn away from" and if she continued in the "adulterous" relationship with Rex, it would be evidence that she hadn't truly repented. When she asked the pastor about the kids, he just shrugged and said, "you are just reaping what you've sown".

She left in tears and after driving for hours, she stopped at a convenience store for some gas and spotted the liquor section. She had never been one to indulge in such things, but for some reason she had an overwhelming urge to buy a bottle. After she paid for it she drove to the river and parked the car. How could this be happening? she kept asking herself. Opening the bottle, she

sipped some of the content. Before she knew it, the bottle was empty and she was feeling very light-headed.

She got out of her car and staggered to the bridge. There wasn't much traffic that hour of the morning, but as she stumbled onto the bridge a car came from nowhere and almost hit her. She continued a little further and in the darkness she could hear the raging waters below. As she climbed up the rail, her only thought was that it be quick. Then, one by one, the faces of her children, like a slow motion video, passed before her eyes. "Oh Jesus, please help me! I need you now!" she screamed.

That was the last thing that she remembered about that night. She awoke the next morning in the back seat of her car without knowing what had happened.

She never returned to the Church after Rex had obtained the divorce. He had remarried and seemed happy with his new life. He never visited the kids nor supported them in any way, but he had continued to attend the Church. She heard that he had even become a deacon. On Sunday afternoons, when the weather was nice, she could see him playing golf with the pastor at the local country club on her way to work.

After fifteen years, she no longer had to fight the anger when she saw them, indeed, it was almost as if she were a piece of machinery, without feelings. She would rise up in the mornings, go to work and when she got home begin the destructive routine of pills and alcohol until she passed out.

She felt a stiffness in the wind and knew that another summer was coming to an end.

[I must add a personal note here . . . the people that I've described here are real people. Of course the names have been changed and the details are altered so that they can remain anonymous, but the life experiences are real and the chapters are still being written because these people are still living. I know first hand the damage that can result from these kind of things and my prayer (and purpose in writing) is that we all would be slow to speak and quick to reach out, with compassion, to individuals who find themselves in these situations. Let us proclaim the *good news* and be effective in our evangelism!]

moulder
