

Evangelistic Preaching & gospel ministry

Acts 14:8-28

1. Hardship and getting back up again

V20 – amazing! Why? Paul is not just an iron man – rather he is able to get up again because [he has already died](#), he counts his life worth nothing, he just wants to finish the task (Acts 20:24).

Although ultimately the results are in God's hands, your degree of success will very largely correlate with your willingness to take rejection and pain and get back up again willing to face more pain and rejection.

Relevant to PD, Sales, Evangelism

In boxing – all about ability to take hits; you get knocked down but you get up again; not going to get anywhere if worried about getting hurt

In street fighting – not the best moves or biggest guy, it's the mad guy; it's the raw passion and aggression; get knocked down and come right back again

Top sales person – doesn't take it personally, willing to take rejection and keep going

In PD/Sales/Evangelism it's not about aggression but there should be that passion – fierce love of Christ compels us – that makes us willing to take rejection, pick self up and go in again willing to get hurt again. Often worried about getting hurt and rejected so give up before started, apologetic.

In rugby – coach tells us “Throw yourself on the ground, you're going to be hitting that a lot”; if you avoid pain you're never going to win anything; you need to be able to take the hits. In rugby if get knocked down it's not like football where you lie around crying; if you get knocked down the coach screams from the side, “Get back in there.”

We're on the side saying to you, “Get back in there!” There will be pain, there will be rejection, you will lose some friends, we must go through many hardships and tribulations as we enter the kingdom of God. But it's worth it. You can do it. Get back in there.

2. Making disciples by preaching the gospel, preaching the gospel to make disciples

- a. The goal is obedience not decisions (Matt. 28:18:20). A disciple is a learner, an obey-er, a follower, a disciple-maker.¹ A disciple is one yoked to Jesus.
- b. And we make disciples by preaching the gospel. Colossians 1:28. And look at how Paul preaches that gospel:
 - i. Acts 14:15-17 – surprise! – the gracious God already supplying; complete opposite of the prosperity gospel – Paul preaches: you have prosperity already, you are worshipping the gifts not the giver; turn from idolatry and come to Christ and you will be safe from judgment but there will be hardships
 - ii. [Acts 17:22-31 – 0-1-2-3](#)
- c. Still very **careful** – Expository, Scripture driven (Acts 8:35 cf. Acts 2; 17:1-3; 28:23) – carefulness mustn't go out the window when in evangelism – still important to be careful with the Scriptures: context, get the big point of the passage, see what the natural application is, preach the Good news about Jesus from Scriptures (e.g. Isaiah 53). Practical point: go for something simple on Jesus, Cross, not so much background needed, stories not complex arguments, one verse is fine. Avoid notes but don't avoid the

¹ See <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/give-up-your-weak-definition-of-disciple-2>.

Bible. Very easy to get carried away, wander off from the big idea of the passage and from Jesus and start making wild unbiblical promises.

- d. Totally **Christ-centred**. Focus to be on the Cross of Christ (John 12:32). Wooing like John the Baptist (John 3:25-30): People are going away from John – he is really happy about that – he is happy when people leave his church... as long as they go down the road to Jesus. Points away from self to Jesus – v26 (cf. 1:7-8,15,29) – v30 _____ Driven by joy – v29 – loves hear the bridegroom’s voice + his joy goes even higher when other people go to the bridegroom. Put that together – he is the friend of the bridegroom introducing the bride to the bridegroom. Richard Sibbes – “woo for Christ, and open the riches, beauty, honour, and all that is lovely in him.” We want evangelistic preaching that is full of Jesus. When ‘altar call’ at end when no mention of Christ – what Christ am I accepting? What content about Christ – not just bland statements – he’s wonderful, he’s faithful – tell me what he’s done, what he’s said, tell me stories about him. Extra **clear**. Get it very simple – takes a lot of study – don’t need oratory. Work hard on the packaging – introductions. Don’t assume anything, Fill in gaps, no jargon. E.g. instead of ‘salvation’ talk about being ‘rescued’.
- e. Get it very **cutting**. Law then Gospel. Urgency. Eternal perspective. “I stand vigilantly on the precipice of eternity speaking to people who this week could go over the edge whether they are ready to or not. I will be called to account for what I say there.” (John Piper) “Preach as a dying man to dying men” Richard Baxter. Or e.g. the Rwandan preacher found preaching amidst the slaughter of the genocide.² What would you preach if you knew that you and your congregation would soon to face the machete? There should be a right urgency and seriousness. Give a next step, or range of next steps – use the language of the passage (e.g. confess over head of the lamb) – and link up with follow up. Pray, Pray, Pray – cannot respond without the Lord.
- f. Full of **compassion** (Matt. 9:36; Romans 9:2-3; 10:1). E.g. George Whitefield: “he hardly ever knew him get through a sermon without tears. There seems to have been nothing whatever of affectation in this. He felt intensely for the souls before him, and his feeling found a vent in tears. Of all the ingredients of his preaching, nothing, I suspect, was so powerful as this. It awakened sympathies, and touched secret springs in men, which no amount of intellect could have moved. It melted down the prejudices which many had conceived against him. They could not hate the man who wept so much over their souls. They were often so affected as to shed floods of tears themselves. "I came to hear you," said one man, "intending to break your head; but your sermon got the better of me - it broke my heart." Once become satisfied that a man loves you, and you will listen gladly to anything he has got to say.” (J C Ryle, [A sketch of the life and labours of George Whitefield](#))

3. Disciples and discipleship – a corporate obedient race for the kingdom

You need disciples around you (v20).

V22: “WE must go... to enter the kingdom of God.” We’re running a marathon together.

V28 – stayed a long time – If you read Acts quickly you think Paul never stopped but if you read carefully he did actually make several stops with brothers and spends time with them and rests and is refreshed. (e.g. Acts 28:14)

Application: find a good church.

4. Strengthening and encouraging

V21-22 – how well is follow-up done in our context? And is it just a marketing / corporate-style follow-up to get numbers for our ministry or is it driven by a genuine concern for the spiritual growth and faith survival of others? 1 Thess. 2:17-3:13; 3 John 4.

² Story at <http://www.commontheology.com/vol1no1july2002/thepreacher.htm>.

5. Team ministry

Acts 14:1, 23. Paul always works with others – Romans 16 cf. 2 Cor. 2:13.

Find good people you can do ministry with. Who you work with is at least as important as what you are going in the harvest field.

6. Eldership

V23 – plurality of eldership.

“For there is nothing in greater opposition to the discipline of Christ than tyranny; and the door is wide open to it if all the power is surrendered to one man” (Calvin on 1 Cor. 5:4).

Think through church polity.³

7. The Antioch model of missions

V26-27 – what do you notice there?

- [Local church is the mission agency](#). There should not be ‘church people’ and ‘mission people’ – the church should be mission-hearted and mission-hearted people should love and work through and be sent by and be accountable to the church. The mission of God will result in churches which result in mission which results in churches.
- The report back. To the whole gathered church (not just a pdf report to the leadership). “What God has done... he had opened a door of faith.” – there is a whole theology here – the supremacy of God in salvation and missions. Not just pious words. Paul really believes he is nothing without Christ and only God opens hearts (e.g. Acts 16:14).

- How will you be involved in the local church?
- How will you be involved in disciple-making?
- How will you be involved in mission?

OUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO PREACHING AS SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT LINE

- Be prepared and glad to turn your back on ‘cheap popularity’
- Brace yourself up to go against popular trends
- Aim to have no regrets in losing friends, colleagues, contacts and sometimes family members
- Aim to have no regrets if people leave your church/ministry on account of sound doctrine (2 Tim 3:1-4:6)
- Only aim to be faithful to God, to yourself and to those who listen to you (2 Tim 4:6-8)

(Steven Musa-Kormayea)

“Preach so that if the people don’t hate their sin they will hate you.” (Luther)

³ Listen to podcast <http://www.alliancenet.org/mos/podcast/clerical-clarification> and read <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/church-elders>.