

EVANGELIVING

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Every October, I deal with something like many other Christians have to deal with - Halloween. Besides all the Pagan roots to this holiday that we celebrate, the darkness and evil that is so often praised and even worshipped makes me uncomfortable. Plus, I've got two young boys that makes my decision as to what to do with Halloween even more difficult. The way I see it, there are four different ways to handle Halloween. See if you can relate to any of them.

1: Passive: You would lock all the doors, turn out all the lights, leave if you have to, but pretend that you're not home so that you avoid everyone that knocks on your door.

2: Passive-Aggressive: You could answer your door with apples with Bible verses on them that tells people that the Devil roams around like a roaring lion. Secretly in your heart, you hope they get the hint.

3: Aggressive: You could stand out on your front porch and yell at all the trick-or-treaters and say, *"Halloween worships the Devil, and you all are going to Hell!"*

And while all of those ideas have crossed my mind as a way to deal with Halloween, none of those fit the mold of friendship evangelism, or as I like to call it, Evangeliving. We all have a calling, a mission, a commission that we accept as we become disciples of Jesus. Your personal vision may be different than mine, or your church's vision may be different, but every Christian, every disciple has the same mission...to make more disciples. Here's how Jesus tells us about His mission.

Matthew 28:19-20: "Go and make _____ of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our mission, God's mission, is to make disciples of Jesus! Our job is to help others become fully-devoted followers of Jesus that help others follow Him too! And if that is our life-calling, our purpose, our reason for living, then we'd better think and act and live through the lens of evangeliving!

The Bible is full of stories of people that understood Evangeliving. One of my favorites is the story of Tabitha, although you might know her by the name, Dorcas. Here's the story:

Acts 9:36-37: "In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated as Dorcas), who was always occupied with works of kindness and charity. At that time, however, she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upper room."

Tabitha was known for helping people. She was known for her kindness. She was known for her sewing ability, because she continually had made shirts and pants and robes and all sorts of clothing for people that were in need. She LOVED people, and people loved her too. She was living her life in a way that honored God. I would say that she was evangeliving! After she dies, here's what happens as Peter is called to do something.

Acts 9:39: "So Peter got up and went with them. On his arrival, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood around him, weeping and showing him the tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them."

This part of the story gets pretty hilarious to me, because Peter, a disciple of Jesus, comes into the room where Dorcas is, and all of a sudden, he is surrounded by widows who are crying loudly and showing him their clothes! Can you imagine this? I think that if I were Peter, I would be annoyed and said, "Give me some space!" But what's happening is a tribute to what an incredible woman Tabitha was! These widows were mourning. They were hurting because of the loss of someone that showed them that they cared. They were wearing trophies, gifts, from Tabitha, and their heart broke because of her death. Tabitha had cared for them when no one else did! Tabitha had loved them when they had felt unlovable. Tabitha showed her compassion on them every day, and because of this, they mourned her loss. Each and every day, Tabitha lived a life that drew people closer to a God that loves and cares about them too.

And as if God wasn't done using Tabitha, or maybe because He wanted us to know how to live a life that is always on His mission, He used Peter to do something amazing.

Acts 9:40: "Then Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down and prayed, and turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up."

Peter, through God's power, brought her back to life! Her evangeliving life was so powerful that God brought her back to life so that she could continue making connections and helping others see Jesus. And that's exactly what evangeliving is: living a life that draws others to Jesus.

BASIC POINT

Evangeliving is living a life that draws others to Jesus.

Evangeliving is a way of life.

It's a lifestyle.

It's a continual reason and purpose to strive for.

It's living every breath with a mission to show God's love to others.

It's choosing to intentionally use every day and every resource you have to bring others closer to Jesus.

THAT is evangeliving! That's what life is really all about!

In the New Testament, as Paul and Timothy are going from place to place planting churches and leading people to Jesus, there's another character that is mentioned that obviously understood what evangeliving is. Here's how Barnabas is described in the book of Acts.

Acts 11:24: "Barnabas was a _____ man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord." (NLT)

This description is so powerful, because it identifies Barnabas as someone that was good (i.e. friendly, loving, kind, generous, hospitable, caring, etc.), full of the Holy Spirit and strong in his faith. He lived a life dedicated to God! He lived with purpose and intentionality!

And the Bible says that because he was into evangelizing, because he lived with the purpose of making disciples, "...many were brought to the Lord." That's so powerful! It shows the human-God connection that brings people into a saving relationship! It shows how when we live with a kingdom-mind, living to bring others to Jesus, that He will work through us and use us to make disciples.

One of my favorite verses that talks about evangelizing is this verse:

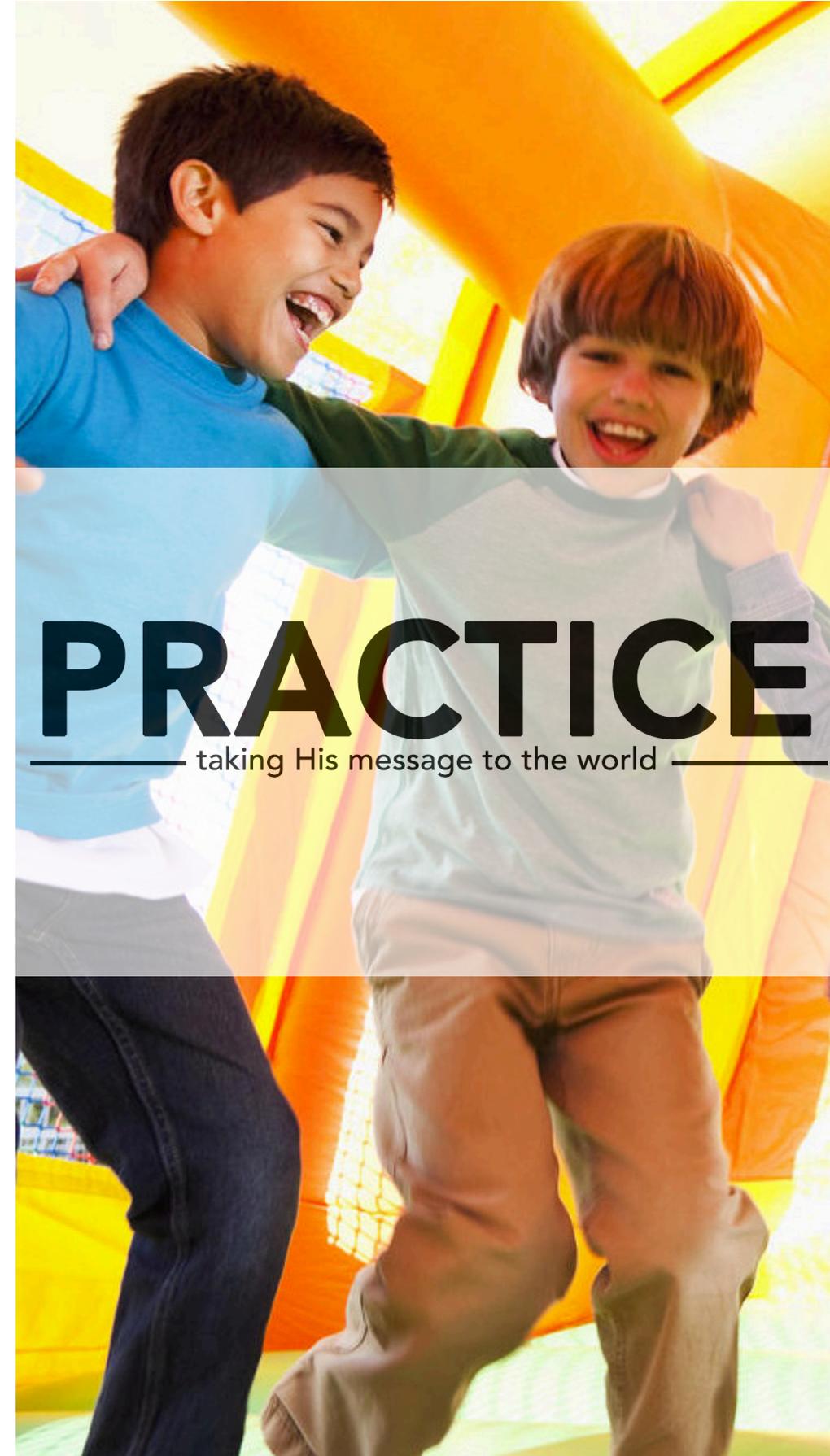
Matthew 5:16: "Let your light [life] shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your _____ in heaven."

This is evangelizing...living in such a way that people see how you live and they glorify God, or as I like to put it, see their need for Him. This is what life is all about! It's our calling! It's our God-given purpose! It's our reason for living.

Earlier, as I was sharing about the Halloween struggle in my family, I said that there were four different ways to handle it in my mind. Well, here's the fourth way, and it's something that my family is working on implementing. See here's the deal. I live in a neighborhood that is filled with busy people. Many get up before the sun and drive to downtown Atlanta to go to work. They usually get home after the sun has gone down. They are tired, and the last thing they want to do is get out and meet their neighbors. Often times, the only time that I will see them is when they pull into their garage and when they drive out. That's it! But, there is one night every year that all my neighbors are out and about...Halloween. It's the one night where all the neighbors are walking the streets of our neighborhood meeting neighbors. And because I believe that my life should always revolve around building friendships and sharing Jesus with them, we've decided to treat Halloween as a way to reach people for Christ. Here's what we've decided to do. We want to host a party! No, it's not a party celebrating Halloween. No, we aren't putting witches and ghosts all over our yard. No, we aren't carving jack-o-lanterns and telling scary stories. We're hosting a "fall party," with snacks and cookies. We've talked about renting a bounce house for the kids. We want to send invitations out to the whole neighborhood inviting them to start their trick-or-treating at our house with some fun. And I guarantee that while the kids play, the parents

talking together. Friendships will be made. Cell phone numbers will be exchanged for a stronger connection. Relationships will be built so that at some point, Jesus will be able to be shared.

I don't know if what we are doing will work, but I know that it is the epitome of evangelizing - living in every way to help others know Jesus. And whether it works or not, I feel like we are doing our best to fulfill the great commission that Jesus gave us.



PRACTICE

— taking His message to the world —

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have you seen yourself or others evangelizing?
 2. What makes evangelizing difficult?
 3. What do you need to do in order to change your mindset to be more focused on reaching others for Jesus?
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LESSON 2: EVANGELIVING