

Leave the Results to God

During my student ministry days (a gazillion years ago), I preached at one of our church services. As an associate pastor, this is not something I did every Sunday, but our senior pastor gave me frequent opportunities. I don't remember what passage I used or what I said, but afterward, one of the students, Cliff, caught me and said, "Boy, that was a really good sermon. It's too bad no one came forward."

He said it with both enthusiasm and disappointment. Cliff was a new believer, and he assumed a sermon was only as good as the number of people who walked to the front at the invitation.

I explained to Cliff that it was not my job to get people to come forward. My job was to preach Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit's job to convict and draw people to Jesus.

Frankly, I prefer that arrangement. I'm a lousy salesman. I have difficulty convincing anyone to do anything, much less convict them of their sin and need for Christ. I do want to be persuasive, but I can only do so if I'm allowing the Holy Spirit to work through me.

This principle applies to all believers. It applies to you. It's not up to you to convict people.

Too many Christians don't think they can witness. They don't think they have the skills to persuade anyone to trust in Christ. But we're not called to convert the masses; we're called to tell about Jesus. It's OK if you haven't memorized a book on systematic theology; just tell of your own encounter with Jesus.

There is one thing you need, but if you're a believer, you're already got this: the Holy Spirit. We are called—*commanded!*—to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). It is not an option. Whether you're preaching to a crowd, sharing Christ with a ten-year-old, texting a friend, or eating Cap'n Crunch—anything and everything you do—you are to be under the lordship of Christ, letting His Holy Spirit work through you. All the time. 24/7.

That's the "secret" of telling someone about Jesus. The Spirit empowers your words even as He convicts the other person of the truth. It's all His work. You just need to be available.

In Acts 2, Peter preached his first sermon after the coming of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit filled him, he told the crowd about Jesus. The Spirit was so at work that Peter did not have to extend an altar call. They interrupted Peter's sermon because the convicting work of the Spirit was heavy on them.

"When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?'" (Acts 2:37).

When you have an opportunity to talk to someone about Christ, it's great if they respond right then and there. But don't be frustrated if they don't. Don't be frustrated if a group doesn't immediately respond to your teaching about Jesus. The Spirit is at work, and He convicts in His time.

I once had a student I dreaded coming to my Bible study. He came simply to get out of the house. He could be disruptive. He was a thorn in my ecclesiastical side. But he was a wholly different person two years later. God got a hold of him, convicted him, and as a result, this young man made a full-on commitment to following Christ. (He's now an overseas missionary.)

What got my attention were some things he said after his commitment to Christ. As we talked, he would refer back to things I had taught earlier, things I had said when he was still the poster child for annoying teenagers. I realized that, even though I did not see outward evidence of God's work, the Holy Spirit was at work in his life.

Take heart. Life under the lordship of Christ. Ask Him to work through You. And leave the results to Him. You don't need to convict anyone; let God do what He does best.