

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Communicating the Gospel in a
Pluralistic World



SESSION 9

Communicating the Gospel in a
Religiously Pluralistic World

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Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

SESSION OVERVIEW

Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

Communicating the Gospel in a Pluralistic World

On Faith

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- appreciate and embrace the qualities required of a Christian minister—with specific reference to the Wesleyan tradition—in a religiously pluralistic world
- understand and embrace biblical principles for communicating the gospel in a religiously pluralistic world
- understand how to communicate the gospel in a pluralistic world

Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

INTRODUCTION



John Fischer tells of attending a birthday bash at the Starplex amphitheater in Dallas. The partygoers were there to celebrate the anniversary of a local alternative rock station. On that summer night the smoke from tobacco “and some other leaves” hung low. One Christian group—Jars of Clay—was the only Christian group to appear. The man next to Fischer had five earrings on his face, only two of which were on his ears. As Fischer looked out over the crowd, six young men—Jars of Clay—slipped onstage and began to sing, “Arms nailed down, are you telling me something?” Fischer said to himself, “We’ve waited a long time for this.”

Noticing Fischer’s backstage pass, the man with the facial jewelry asked Fischer, “Are you with Jars?” “Yes,” Fischer answered. The man continued, “If you’re going to see them afterwards, would you thank them for me? I became a Christian listening to their CD. I played it over and over and figured out just about everything. I went and got a Christian friend of mine—pulled him out of a party—and told him I wanted to get saved right away. He didn’t believe me. You wouldn’t have either. I hated Christians.”

John Fischer, Fearless Faith: Living Beyond the Walls of “Safe” Christianity (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2002), 221-23.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A RELIGIOUSLY PLURALISTIC WORLD

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In any age, no higher privilege can be extended to a human than that of declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this session we will examine three dimensions of proclamation:

1. the Christian minister in a religiously pluralistic world
2. biblical principles for communicating the gospel in a religiously pluralistic world
3. communicating the gospel in a pluralistic world

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER IN A RELIGIOUSLY PLURALISTIC WORLD

What qualities and skills should characterize the Christian minister as he or she communicates the gospel in a pluralistic world?

A Christian minister must first have been grasped by the glory and power of the Christian gospel.

The gospel must have become his or her consuming passion. This must be evident in his or her life and thought. A love for the gospel must translate into the way he or she lives in his or her family, community, and in the Church. The appeal of the beggarly elements of this world must have been replaced by the surpassing glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, he or she must have an integrity grounded in the character of God. The apostle Paul said, “I believed, and so I spoke” (2 Cor. 4:13).

A Christian minister must be a diligent student of the gospel.

The gospel is never mastered; it must repeatedly master us. A person satisfied with a minimal knowledge of and interest in the gospel—in all the things of God—is unworthy of the Christian ministry. He or she must be a diligent student of the Holy Scriptures, not simply to the extent one prepares sermons for public presentation, but as an ardent student.

One of the greatest temptations any of us in the Christian ministry face—regardless of one’s denomination—is to become a hireling, that is, to preach a gospel tailored by the surrounding culture. Hirelings and stewards are of two different orders. A Christian minister has ceased being a bearer of the *euangelion* of God—the


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gospel—when he or she crafts his or her preaching, pastoral leadership, and vision of the Church in the world as inoffensive to the powers of this age: consumerism, nationalism, racism, gender worship, and so forth. By the power of the Pentecostal Spirit, and by faithfully following the way of the Cross, a minister of Christ can bear witness to “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

A Christian minister must be a curious person.

By curious we mean he or she must have a lively interest in broadly learning about all things that bear upon effectively communicating the gospel in a pluralistic and postmodern world. The complexity of the world requires this. The powers of evil in our world will not have much to fear from a dull minister satisfied with minimal curiosity and minimal learning. Learn from other persons; learn from a broad range of books and magazines that challenge one’s comfort zone; learn from seminars offered in one’s community—the university, the community college, etc.—and the world of opportunities goes on. For those who have access to the Internet, opportunities for continuous and broad learning are almost unlimited.

Few persons can become authorities on all the world’s religions, but it seems imperative that a Christian minister have at least a working knowledge of them. There are excellent introductory texts. An older text Dr. Truesdale continues to find most helpful is John B. Noss, *Man’s Religions*, Macmillan, 1974. An alert Christian minister should also try to become as familiar as possible with the newer religious options that range far beyond the traditional religions. One need not invest large amounts of money to do this.

The Links page of *the Pluralism Project of Harvard University* is a goldmine of resources. The site is available at <https://pluralism.org/project-resources>.

A Christian minister must be a student of the world.

The theologian Karl Barth said he had to learn how to preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. If one attempts to proclaim the gospel in the absence of being a student of the world, then he or she may likely not connect with his or her hearers. One may only succeed in hurling the gospel into the world the way one hurls a rock through a window. Opportunities for being a student of the world differ from one person to another and from one location to another. We should be careful not to make expectations of persons they simply cannot fill. Some persons have better access to news media, to libraries, and to computer technology than others. This just needs to be recognized. However, in full accordance with the opportunities for learning one has, his or her responsibility to the gospel is clear: become a student of the social, educational, popular, political, religious, economic, and technological currents at play in the world.


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For those who have some access to the Internet, a wealth of good resources for being a student of the world is available. Books, newspapers, newsweeklies, book and movie reviews, and assessments of popular culture abound.

PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GOVERN COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL IN A RELIGIOUSLY PLURALISTIC WORLD

Know what the gospel is.

Describing features of Jesus' life is not the good news. Nor should pushing one's denomination in Jesus' name ever pass as the gospel. One must know why the gospel is the gospel of God. A seminary professor was fond of asking seminary seniors as they sat for their comprehensive examinations that would qualify them for graduation, "What is the gospel?" Numerous students who had taken all of the courses still could not present a simple and clear statement of the gospel.

Know what the gospel is about.

The gospel is first of all good news about God and about what God has done for the redemption of humankind, the creation, and commissioning the Church to herald God's salvation. The gospel is a message of hope. God has a redemptive, creative, and vital vision for humans, society, and all of creation. It is a vision of His Love. To express the message of Jesus in a positive way is not to say, "We're all OK." Rather, it is to say that God is able and willing to make things, including us, right.

Know the relationship between the old and new covenants.

The relationship between the old and new covenants must be made clear. What is the relation of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus to the activity of God and faith of Israel prior to Jesus' birth? The herald must understand and tell how all God's purposes for Israel, the nations, and the creation are fulfilled in God's Messiah (2 Cor. 1:19-22; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Jesus Christ is the Israel of God.

Know who Jesus is.

One must clearly understand what it means to call Jesus the Christ—Messiah—of God. Why do we call Him the Redeemer? Three very helpful books that address this subject, and can be purchased through Internet used bookstores, are: Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (John Knox, 1974); Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (Westminster Press, 1934); and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus* (Harper, 1999).

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Know who the gospel is for.

The gospel is meant for all persons everywhere. This means no persons, regardless of their sinful past and regardless of the powers that enslave them, are excluded from the promise of New creation by the Spirit.

The gospel of redemption is purely the gift of God's grace.

Neither human accomplishments nor pride of place, face, or race contribute anything to redemption. In fact, bringing any of these forward for recognition only frustrates the work of God's grace.

Know that the Holy Spirit has already prepared the way.

The herald must recognize how the Spirit of God has already prepared the way for telling the Good News. Through His prevenient grace, God has been evangelizing long before the human messenger arrives. The herald should seek to discern the preparation the Spirit has already accomplished in the person to whom the gospel is spoken.

Know the difference between witnessing and convincing.

By the power of the Spirit, all Christians are called to witness to what Jesus Christ has accomplished in their lives. But Christians are not called to convince anyone that Jesus is the Christ. As the New Testament makes clear, convincing is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. Persons who ignore this important distinction have done great harm. Just because a person bears witness does not mean a hearer has, in the gospel sense, heard the witness. True hearing and convincing is the work of the Holy Spirit. The minister who understands and supports the singular work of the Holy Spirit must be patient, and must wait for the prevenient work of the Spirit to mature until the point at which hearing is possible. If a person hears—because the Holy Spirit has enlightened him or her—then the hearer must come to grips with the Holy Spirit, not with human arguments that can be set aside as oppressive. A witness must learn to be discerning.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

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How does one communicate the gospel in a pluralistic world? Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 can provide a good answer to our question. His statement is as instructive today as it was in the first century. Early in the Christian Church there appeared persons who saw they could profit by twisting the gospel to suit their own carnal interests. For them, desecrating the message of the Cross and Resurrection was a small price to pay for personal gain. So in the interest of personal benefit they put their sinful imaginations to work. The apostle Paul knew these charlatans were at work. In the power of the Spirit, he fought efforts to distort the gospel. Time and again he contrasted his proclamation of the gospel with the opportunists who like wolves had crept into the Church. In that context, Paul delivered a message every faithful minister of the gospel should digest. It has three parts.

A faithful minister of the gospel is a steward.

One who communicates the gospel in a pluralistic world must recognize that he or she is a steward, not an owner. That one speaks for God, not for himself or herself. The gospel belongs to God, not to the one who proclaims it. The one who proclaims, Paul says, has a ministry "by God's mercy" (2 Cor. 4:1). Who is this God? He is "the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). God determines what the gospel is, not finite humankind. The one who proclaims must not alter the gospel in any way. We will be judged by the faithfulness we show as stewards of the gospel.

One of the major tests a steward must face, and pass, is whether he or she represent oneself or one's master. Paul knew the imposters were only using the name of Jesus to preach themselves. What sacrilege! What blasphemy! That a person would use the name of the Redeemer as a device for advancing themselves, their own cause, and their own ecclesiastical advancement.

Upon such a one the judgment of God will surely be visited in the day of reckoning. But Paul had slain that dragon: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5).

A faithful minister does nothing deceitful to herald the good news.

One who understands that he or she speaks in the name of the righteous God will have nothing to do with deceit or clever devices for heralding the good news. The very manner in which the gospel is proclaimed must itself reveal the


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character of God. One is astonished by how often men and women with carnal minds reach for deceitful ways as a means for speaking about God. They seem to think the end justifies the means. They fail to see their methods undercut the gospel they preach. Paul said, “We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word” (2 Cor. 4:2).

A faithful minister must love mercy and do justice.

As has always been true, and is certainly true in a pluralistic world, the one who hopes rightly to bear witness to the gospel must place oneself in the service of justice and mercy in the world. Drawing on Isa. 61:1-2 and 58:6, Jesus in the Gospel of Luke interprets His ministry as the fulfillment of the eschatological Jubilee (Lev. 25). This is a key for understanding and receiving the age of salvation. Hence, the ministry of Jesus and the age of salvation are marked by release. In Luke, release occurs in three forms:

- release from diabolical power, so people are healed—Luke 13:10-17; Acts 10:38
- release from the debilitating cycle of debt by which those of higher status and greater means control the lives of those without power and privilege—Luke 6:27-36
- release or forgiveness of sins—Luke 7:47-49

In Jesus’ first recorded public sermon He proclaimed the good news by saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19, RSV). Loving mercy and doing justice as good news is the form of apologetics by which the Wesleyan tradition is best identified.

A faithful minister trusts wholly in God’s sovereignty.

The one who would faithfully herald the good news in a pluralistic world must place his or her total trust in the wisdom, timing, and power of God, and not in manipulation, one’s own impulsiveness, or privileges associated with power of any kind. That the gospel is for all persons everywhere does not mean devices of force and intimidation should be employed to win them. Conversions that occur as the result of force or intimidation—whether by the power of the state, economic pressure, or military force—bring shame upon the precious name of Jesus Christ. A minister who has not yet renounced violence and oppression as contrary to the gospel is still an enemy of the Cross, not its emissary.

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Paul said only the Holy Spirit can convince a person of the gospel's truth, and He does so making the gospel far more attractive to a person than anything that attracted him or her before. When from within the depths of person he or she confesses, "My Lord and my God," the gospel has succeeded through persuasion, not through coercion.

The charge that the Christian faith is a totalizing, oppressive religion is true only if the Christian faith is either misunderstood or misrepresented. The gospel of Jesus Christ does make universal promises to and claims upon all persons. But the claims are to be pressed by the Holy Spirit, not by a coercive Church or preacher. The uses of coercion or deceit are shameful ways that cannot represent the Messiah, who will not break the bruised reed or quench the dimly burning wick (Isa. 42:3).

A question every Christian minister must ask is, "Do I have sufficient confidence in the Holy Spirit to make the gospel attractive to those who hear the good news? Do I have confidence in the gospel?" One who resorts to coercion of any kind thereby reveals for all to see that he or she does not trust the Holy Spirit, does not trust the gospel. He or she also shows they do not respect and do not love the persons to whom they speak.

If one is to effectively communicate the gospel in a pluralistic world, one must be able to affirm with the apostle Paul, "We do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Who is sufficient for the responsibility we have explored in this lesson, and in this module? No one!

Left to themselves, only fools or charlatans would not flee the Christian ministry. But praise God, the sufficiency is not from us. Through the centuries many Christian ministers have claimed for themselves the Lord's promise to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." We may also embrace Paul's response, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10, RSV).

ON FAITH

JOHN WESLEY, SERMON ONE HUNDRED SIX (SELECTED)

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“Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Heb. 11:6.

1. But what is Faith? It is a divine “evidence and conviction of things not seen;” of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God. This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given; as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises which have been published upon the subject.
2. Something indeed of a similar kind has been written by that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher, in his “Treatise on the various Dispensations of the Grace of God.” Herein he observes, that there are four dispensations that are distinguished from each other by the degree of light which God vouchsafes to them that are under each. A small degree of light is given to those that are under the heathen dispensation. These generally believed, “that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

But a far more considerable degree of light was vouchsafed to the Jewish nation; inasmuch as to them “were entrusted” the grand means of light, “the oracles of God.” Hence many of these had clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God; of their duty to God and man; yea, and of the great promise made to our first parents, and transmitted by them to their posterity, that “the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.”

3. But above both the heathen and Jewish dispensation was that of John the Baptist. To him a still clearer light was given; and he himself “a burning and shining light.” To him it was given to “behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” Accordingly our Lord himself affirms, that “of all which had been born of women,” there had not till that time arisen “a greater than John the Baptist.”

But nevertheless he informs us, “He that is least in the kingdom of God,” the Christian dispensation, “is greater than he.” By one that is under the Christian dispensation, Mr. Fletcher means one that has received the Spirit of adoption; that has the Spirit of God witnessing “with his spirit, that he is a child of God.”


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In order to explain this still farther, I will endeavour, by the help of God, First, To point out the several sorts of faith: And, Secondly, to draw some practical inferences.

- I. In the First place, I will endeavour to point out the several sorts of faith. It would be easy, either to reduce these to a smaller number, or to divide them into a greater. But it does not appear that this would answer any valuable purpose.
 1. The lowest sort of faith if it be any faith at all, is that of a Materialist—a man who . . . believes there is nothing but matter in the universe. I say, if it be any faith at all: for, properly speaking, it is not. It is not “an evidence or conviction of God,” for they do not believe there is any; neither is it “a conviction of things not seen,” for they deny the existence of such. Or if, for decency’s sake, they allow there is a God, yet they suppose even him to be material. For one of their maxims is, *Jupiter est quodcunque vides*. “Whatever you see, is God.” Whatever you see! A visible, tangible god! Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!
 2. The Second sort of faith, if you allow a Materialist to have any, is the faith of a Deist. I mean, one who believes there is a God, distinct from matter; but does not believe the Bible. Of these we may observe two sorts. One sort are mere beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having “a downright appetite to mix with mud.”

Other Deists are, in most respects, rational creatures, though unhappily prejudiced against Christianity: Most of these believe the being and attributes of God; they believe that God made and governs the world; and that the soul does not die with the body, but will remain for ever in a state of happiness or misery.
 3. The next sort of faith is the faith of Heathens, with which I join that of Mahometans. I cannot but prefer this before the faith of the Deists; because, though it embraces nearly the same objects, yet they are rather to be pitied than blamed for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light. When one asked Chicali, an old Indian Chief, “Why do not you red men know as much as us white men?” he readily answered, “Because you have the great Word, and we have not.”
 4. It cannot be doubted, but this plea will avail for millions of modern Heathens. In as much as to them little is given, of them little will be required. As to the ancient Heathens, millions of them, likewise were savages. No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living


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up to the light they had. But many of them, especially in the civilized nations, we have great reason to hope, although they lived among Heathens, yet were quite of another spirit; being taught of God, by His inward voice, all the essentials of true religion.

5. But, in general, we may surely place the faith of a Jew above that of a Heathen or Mahometan. By Jewish faith, I mean, the faith of those who lived between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ. These, that is, those that were serious and sincere among them, believed all that is written in the Old Testament. In particular, they believed that, in the fullness of time, the Messiah would appear, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness."
6. It is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern Jews. It is plain, "the veil is still upon their hearts" when Moses and the Prophets are read. The god of this world still hardens their hearts, and still blinds their eyes, "lest at any time the light of the glorious gospel" should break in upon them. So that we may say of this people, as the Holy Ghost said to their forefathers, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts 28:27.) Yet it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to leave them to their own Master.
7. I need not dwell upon the faith of John the Baptist, any more than the dispensation which he was under; because these, as Mr. Fletcher well describes them, were peculiar to himself. Setting him aside, the faith of the Roman Catholics, in general, seems to be above that of the ancient Jews. If most of these are volunteers in faith, believing more than God has revealed, it cannot be denied that they believe all which God has revealed, as necessary to salvation. In this we rejoice on their behalf: We are glad that none of those new Articles, which they added, at the Council of Trent, "to the faith once delivered to the saints, does so materially contradict any of the ancient Articles, as to render them of no effect."
8. The faith of the Protestants, in general, embraces only those truths as necessary to salvation, which are clearly revealed in the oracles of God. Whatever is plainly declared in the Old and New Testament is the object of their faith. They believe neither more nor less than what is manifestly contained in, and provable by, the Holy Scriptures. The word of God is "a lantern to their feet, and a light in all their paths."


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They dare not, on any pretence, go from it, to the right hand or to the left. The written word is the whole and sole rule of their faith, as well as practice. They believe whatsoever God has declared, and profess to do whatsoever he hath commanded. This is the proper faith of Protestants: By this they will abide, and no other.

9. Hitherto faith has been considered chiefly as an evidence and conviction of such or such truths. And this is the sense wherein it is taken at this day in every part of the Christian world. But, in the mean time, let it be carefully observed, (for eternity depends upon it,) that neither the faith of a Roman Catholic, nor that of a Protestant, if it contains no more than this, no more than the embracing such and such truths, will avail any more before God, than the faith of a Mahometan or a Heathen; yea, of a Deist or Materialist. For can this "faith save him?" Can it save any man either from sin or from hell? No more than it could save Judas Iscariot: No more than it could save the devil and his angels; all of whom are convinced that every title of Holy Scripture is true.
10. But what is the faith which is properly saving; which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness." And whosoever, in every nation, believes thus far, the Apostle declares, is "accepted of him." He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a *servant* of God, not properly a son. Meantime, let it be well observed, that "the wrath of God" no longer "abideth on him."
11. Indeed, nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprized of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that even one "who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad.

For they frequently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering, "No," immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No; this does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said with propriety,) "Hitherto you are only a *servant*, you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him, 'and you shall see greater things than these.'"


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12. And, indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God, by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts. Thus, the faith of a child is, properly and directly, a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And whosoever hath this, the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God.

So the Apostle writes to the Galatians: "Ye are the sons of God by faith. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" that is, giving you a childlike confidence in him, together with a kind affection toward him. This then it is, that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God, and a child of God. "He that believeth," as a child of God, "hath the witness in himself." This the servant hath not. Yet let no man discourage him; rather, lovingly exhort him to expect it every moment.

13. It is easy to observe, that all the sort of faith which we can conceive are reducible to one or other of the preceding. But let us covet the best gifts, and follow the most excellent way. There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a Materialist, a Heathen, or a Deist; nor, indeed, with that of a servant. I do not know that God requires it at your hands. Indeed, if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away; you ought not in anywise to undervalue it but to be truly thankful for it.

Yet, in the mean time, beware how you rest here: Press on till you receive the Spirit of adoption: Rest not, till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

I exhort you, Lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the Apostle: Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus. And then, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," go on to perfection.

Yea, and when ye have attained a measure of perfect love, when God has circumcised your hearts, and enabled you to love him with all your heart and with all your soul, think not of resting there. That is impossible. You cannot stand still; you must either rise or fall; rise higher or fail lower.

Therefore the voice of God to the children of Israel, to the children of God, is, "Go forward!" "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those that are before, press on to the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

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ENDNOTES

1. *PRIMISE 2* (Sept. 27, 1995), 6. The article is used with permission from the September/October 1995 issue of *Modern Reformation*, a superb magazine available from CURE, 2221 East Winston Road Suite K, Anaheim, CA 92806.
2. Cited in Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 103.
5. Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 64.
6. Stanley Hauerwas, et al., eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice & the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 13.
7. *PRIMISE 2* (Sept. 27, 1995), 6. The article is used with permission from September/October 1995 issue of *Modern Reformation*, a superb magazine available from CURE, 2221 East Winston Road Suite K, Anaheim, CA 92806.
8. Cited in Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 69.

APPLICATION

**NOTES**

Write a reflection paper based on the following questions. Be prepared to share that paper with your mentor.

- The session suggests that a Christian minister in a religiously pluralist world must be curious and a student of the world. Do you agree/disagree? Why?
- The session distinguishes between the roles of witnessing (ours) and convincing (the Holy Spirit's). Do you agree/disagree? Why?
- What, in your view, are the key factors in effective evangelism in a religiously pluralistic culture?

EXAM



NOTES

1. Which of the following is NOT essential to communicating the gospel in this postmodern culture _____?
 - A. living a life which expresses the gospel
 - B. being a student of the Word
 - C. mastery of original biblical languages
 - D. being a student of the world
2. The gospel is, above all, a message of hope.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. In proclaiming the gospel we can appropriately trust the Holy Spirit.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. The Holy Spirit's task is witnessing to the gospel; ours is convincing them to believe it.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Our evangelism should work from the recognition that the Holy Spirit will begin to work after we have presented the gospel.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. We should regard our task of communicating the gospel as stewards, rather than owners.
 - A. True
 - B. False
7. The importance of successful evangelism justifies almost any means to accomplish the end.
 - A. True
 - B. False
8. Involvement in issues of justice and mercy will detract from your effectiveness in communicating the gospel.
 - A. True
 - B. False

 **NOTES**

9. We should reject manipulation as an appropriate approach to evangelism.
 - A. True
 - B. False

10. The gospel is a gift of grace.
 - A. True
 - B. False

11. Our adequacy in evangelism is finally in God's power through Christ in the Holy Spirit.
 - A. True
 - B. False

12. Wesley believes that saving faith is a divine work persuading a person to fear and trust God.
 - A. True
 - B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Review the exam questions and answers. Discuss any issues or questions they raise for you.
2. The session suggests that a Christian minister in a religiously pluralist world must be curious and a student of the world. Do you agree/disagree? Why?
3. The session distinguishes between the roles of witnessing (ours) and convincing (the Holy Spirit's). Do you agree/disagree? Why?
4. What, in your view, are the key factors in effective evangelism in a religiously pluralistic culture?