

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Communicating the Gospel
in a Pluralistic World



SESSION 9

Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

CLT Bible Study

Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

Certificate of Lay Ministry
Communicating the Gospel in a Pluralistic World
Dr. David Ackerman, editor
First printing 2025

NOTICE TO CLT PARTICIPANTS AND EDUCATORS

This is a contract. By using these materials, you accept all the terms and conditions of this agreement. This agreement covers all leader's guides, student guides, and instructional resources included in the Continuing Lay Training (CLT) website.

Upon your acceptance of this agreement, CLT grants you a nonexclusive license to use these curricular materials, provided that you agree to the following:

1. USE OF THE MODULES.

- You may distribute educational materials in electronic form to students or other educational providers.
- You may make and distribute electronic or paper copies to students for the purpose of instruction as long as each copy contains this agreement and the same copyright and other proprietary notices pertaining to the module. If you download the educational materials from the internet or similar online sources, you must include the CLT notice for the module with any online distribution and on any media you distribute that includes the educational content.
- You may translate, adapt, and/or modify the examples and instructional resources for the purpose of making the instruction culturally relevant to your students. However, you must agree that you will not sell these modified materials without express, written permission from CLT.

2. COPYRIGHT.

The material is owned by CLT and is protected by United States Copyright Law and International Treaty provisions. Except as stated above, this Agreement does not grant you any intellectual property rights in the Module.

3. RESTRICTIONS.

- You may not sell copies of these educational materials in any form except to recover the minimum reproduction cost of electronic media or photocopy expense.
- You may not modify the wording or original intent of the educational material for commercial use.

THANK YOU

CLT would like to thank Global Education and Clergy Development (GECD) for granting permission to modify and adapt its course of study materials for our educational purposes. GECD's willingness to partner with us is sincerely appreciated.

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 in a religiously pluralistic world, with specific reference to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition;
- understand and embrace biblical principles for communicating the gospel in a religiously pluralistic world; and
- understand how to communicate the gospel in a pluralistic world.

INTRODUCTION

John Fischer went to a birthday party at the Starplex Theater in Dallas. The party was for the birthday of a local alternative rock music station. That summer night, there was a lot of smoke from people smoking tobacco and “some other leaves.” A Christian band called Jars of Clay was the only Christian band there.

Communicating the Gospel in a Religiously Pluralistic World

INTRODUCTION



John Fischer went to a birthday party at the Starplex Theater in Dallas. The party was for the birthday of a local alternative rock music station. That summer night, there was a lot of smoke from people smoking tobacco and “some other leaves.” A Christian band called Jars of Clay was the only Christian band there. The guy sitting next to Fischer had five earrings on his face, and only two were on his ears. As Fischer looked over the crowd, the six young men of Jars of Clay went on stage and started singing, “Arms nailed down, are you telling me something?” Fischer thought to himself, “We’ve been waiting a long time for this.”

The man with the earrings noticed Fischer’s special pass that allowed him backstage. He asked Fischer if he was with the band, and Fischer said yes. The man continued, “If you’re going to see them afterward, 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



NOTES

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

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 Christian ministers have as they share the gospel in a pluralistic world?

Christian ministers must have first been grasped by the glory and power of the story of Jesus.

Their passion must be the gospel. They must be excited about the story of Jesus and show it in how they live and what they think. Their love for the gospel must be shown in how they live in their family, community, and church. They must care more about Jesus than anything else in the world. They have replaced the empty desires for this world with the desire to know and experience the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they must be honest and good with a character of integrity grounded in the character of God. The apostle Paul said, "I believed; therefore I have spoken" (2 Corinthians 4:13).

Christian ministers must be diligent learners of the gospel.

The gospel can never be fully understood, but it must always be teaching us. A person who is satisfied with knowing just a little about the story of Jesus is not fit to be a Christian minister. He or she must always be learning about the Bible. He or she must be a diligent student of God's Word, not just to prepare sermons to be presented in the church but to really want to learn Scripture.

One of the biggest temptations for any Christian minister is to avoid becoming a hireling. From a Christian ministry perspective, a hireling is someone who preaches the gospel in a way that is shaped by the surrounding culture. Hirelings


NOTES

and stewards are different. Christian ministers stop being sharers of the story of God—the gospel (Greek euangelion)—when they shape their sermons, pastoral leadership, and vision of the church in the world to avoid upsetting the powers of this age: consumerism, nationalism, racism, gender worship, and so on. They change their message so as not to be offensive to the culture. Instead, by the power of the Pentecostal Spirit and by faithfully following the way of the Cross, ministers of Christ can courageously bear witness to “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Christian ministers must be curious learners.

By curious, we mean ministers must be interested in learning about all things that can help them share the gospel in a pluralistic and postmodern world. They must want to study to become effective communicators of this message to diverse people. The complexity of the world requires this. The powers of evil in our world will not be scared of a boring minister who is satisfied with knowing and learning just a little. Learn from other people. Learn from a wide range of books and magazines that challenge what you are comfortable with. Learn from seminars offered in your community—like at the university, the community college, and so on. There are endless opportunities to learn. For those who can use the internet, the opportunities for continuous and broad learning are almost unlimited.

Not many people can become experts on all the world’s religions. But it seems important and essential that a Christian minister should have at least a working knowledge of them. There are excellent introductory books and materials. For example, an older book that Dr. Truesdale still finds very useful is John B. Noss’s *Man’s Religions*, Macmillan, 1974.

An alert Christian minister should also try to learn as much as possible about the newer religious options that are very different from traditional religions. You do not need to spend a lot of money to do this.

The Links page of the Pluralism Project of Harvard University has a lot of resources. You can find the site at <https://pluralism.org/project-resources> .

Christian ministers must have a good understanding of the world in which we live.

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 we try to share the gospel without understanding the world, we might not connect with the people we are talking to. Trying to share the gospel without knowing the listeners is like throwing a rock through a window. Everyone has different opportunities to learn about the world,


NOTES

depending on where they live and what resources they have. We should not expect people to do things they cannot. We should also realize that some people have better access to news media, libraries, and computer technology than others. But no matter what, if we have the chance to learn, we should. This will help us make the gospel clearer to people. We can learn about society, education, popular culture, politics, religion, economics, and technology.

For those who have access to the internet, there are a lot of resources available to help you learn about the world. You can also find books, newspapers, reviews, and more.

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

Know what the gospel is.

Talking about Jesus' life is not the same as sharing the good news. And just promoting one's church is not the gospel either. We need to understand why the gospel is God's good news. A seminary professor once asked his students on their final exam for graduation, "What is the gospel?" Even though they had studied a lot and taken many courses, many students could not give a simple and clear answer.

Know what the gospel is about.

First of all, the gospel is good news about God and what God has done to save people and creation and to send the church into the world with this message. The gospel is a message of hope. God has a creative vision. This plan is to redeem people, society, and the whole world.

It is a vision of his love. Sharing the gospel in a positive way is not about saying, "We're all OK." It is about saying that God can and wants to make things right, including us!

Know the relationship between the old and new covenants.

We need to understand how the old and new covenants relate to each other. How does Jesus' life and ministry relate to what God did and what Israel believed before Jesus was born? We need to understand and explain how everything God planned for Israel, other nations, and all of creation is fulfilled in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:19-22; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Jesus Christ is the Israel of God.

NOTES*Know who Jesus is.*

We need to understand what it means to call Jesus the Christ, or Messiah, of God. Why do we call him the Redeemer? There are three books that can help you understand this crucial topic: 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).

Know who the gospel is for.

The gospel is for everyone, everywhere. No one is left out, no matter what people have done in the past or what problems they have now. No matter what enslaves them, God has promised new creation through the Holy Spirit.

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

Nothing we do or who we are can earn redemption. Pride of place, face, or race cannot save us. In fact, when we try to show off these things, it only makes it harder for God's grace to do its work.

Know that the Holy Spirit has already prepared the way.

Those who share the Good News should realize that the Holy Spirit has already been there and prepared the way. Through his prevenient grace, God has already been working in people's lives. Before the messenger arrives, God has already been evangelizing. The messenger should try to determine how and in what way the Spirit has been working in that person's life.

Know the difference between witnessing and convincing.

By the power of the Spirit, all Christians are called to share what Jesus has done in their lives. However, we are not called to make anyone believe that Jesus is the Christ. The New Testament shows that is the Holy Spirit's job. People who do not understand the difference between the Christian witness and the Spirit's work have caused a lot of problems. Just because Christians share their story does not mean the listeners really understand it. Truly understanding and believing is the Holy Spirit's work.

A minister who understands the focused work of the Holy Spirit in sharing the gospel must be patient. The witness of the Spirit through prevenient grace will grow and mature until the witness of the Christian will be more easily received. If people hear and understand the gospel—because the Holy Spirit has helped



them—then they have to deal with the Holy Spirit, not with human arguments that can be ignored. Christian witnesses who share their stories must learn to be wise.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD



NOTES

How do we share the gospel in a pluralistic world? Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 can help answer this question. His words are as helpful today as they were back then. In the early days of the Christian Church, some people twisted the gospel to benefit themselves. They did not care if they ruined the message of Jesus' death and resurrection if it helped them gain something.

So, they used their sinful imaginations for personal benefit. Paul knew these charlatans were causing trouble. With the help and power of the Spirit, he fought against their lies and twisting of the gospel message. He often showed how his message of the gospel was different from theirs.

They were like wolves that had snuck into the church. In this context, Paul gave a message that every faithful minister of the gospel should think about. It has three parts.

A faithful minister of the gospel is a steward.

When we share the gospel in a pluralistic world, we need to realize that we are stewards and not owners. We are only caretakers of this message. We speak for God and not ourselves. The gospel belongs to God, not to the one who proclaims it. Paul says that those who preach the gospel do so "by God's mercy" (2 Corinthians 4:1). Who is this God? He is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness." He "made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). God decides what his message is, not us weak humans. The person who shares God's message must not change it in any way. We will be judged by how faithful we are as stewards of the gospel.

One of the big tests for stewards is if they are representing themselves or their masters. They must pass this test to be considered faithful. Paul knew that some people were pretending to preach about Jesus, but they were really just trying to make themselves look good. They represented themselves. They used Jesus' name to promote themselves and their own goals. What sacrilege! What blasphemy! That people use the name of the Redeemer to advance themselves and their agendas and get ahead in the ministry!

God will definitely judge these people when the time comes. But Paul made it clear that he was not doing this: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ


NOTES

as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

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

We must understand that we speak in the name of the righteous God. We must not have anything to do with trickery or clever plans to preach the gospel. The way we share God's message should show what God is like. It is surprising how often people with sinful minds use deceitful methods to talk about God. They seem to think that it is OK to do anything if it helps them reach their goal. They think the end justifies the means. They do not realize that their methods actually harm the message they are trying to share. Paul said, "We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

A faithful minister must love mercy and do justice.

As has always been true, and is especially true in a pluralistic world, if we want to share the gospel message correctly, we need to be just and merciful to others. In the Book of Luke, Jesus saw his ministry as the fulfillment of the promises made in Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. His ministry was the fulfillment of the Jubilee mentioned in Leviticus 25. This is key to understanding and accepting the time of salvation he brought. His ministry and the age of salvation are marked by freedom. In Luke, this freedom comes in three ways:

- Freedom from evil power, so people can be healed—Luke 13:10-17; Acts 10:38
- Freedom from the harmful cycle of debt where rich and powerful people control those who are poor and less privileged—Luke 6:27-36
- Freedom or forgiveness of sins—Luke 7:47-49

In his first sermon, he shared the justice and mercy of the good news. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). Being kind and fair is a big part of the good news, and it is how the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is best known. Loving mercy and doing justice as good news is the best way to identify the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition in its witness to the world.

A faithful minister trusts wholly in God's sovereignty.

If we want to share the gospel in a pluralistic world, we need to trust completely in

 **NOTES**

God's wisdom, timing, and power. We should not rely on tricks, persuasive words, quick decisions, positions, or any kind of power. The good news is for everyone. However, we should not use force or scare tactics to make people believe in it. If people become believers because they were forced or scared into it—whether by the power of the state, economic pressure, or military force—it will bring shame upon the precious name of Jesus Christ. A minister who uses violence and oppression in any way goes against the gospel. He or she is an enemy of the Cross, not its representative.

Paul said only the Holy Spirit can convince people of the gospel's truth. The Holy Spirit does this by making the gospel more appealing than anything else they liked before. When they say from their heart, "My Lord and my God," the good news has worked because it persuaded them, not because it forced them.

People might accuse the Christian faith of being controlling and oppressive. However, this is true only if the Christian faith is misunderstood or shown in the wrong way. The gospel of Jesus Christ does make promises to everyone and asks everyone to believe. But these promises and requests should be made by the Holy Spirit, not by a church or preacher who uses force or intimidation. Using coercion or deceit to make people believe is shameful and does not represent the Messiah. Jesus came with gentleness and patience and would not even break the bruised reed or quench the dimly burning wick (Isaiah 42:3).

Every Christian minister needs to ask, "Do I trust the Holy Spirit enough to make the good news appealing to those who hear it? Do I believe in the good news enough?" If ministers use any kind of force or coercion, it shows that they do not trust the Holy Spirit or the gospel. It also shows that they do not respect or love the people to whom they speak.

If we want to communicate the gospel effectively in a pluralistic world, we need to agree with Paul. He wrote, "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Who can handle the responsibility we talked about in this lesson and this module?
Nobody!

**NOTES**

If left alone, only fools or charlatans would not flee the Christian ministry. But thanks be to God, we do not have to rely on our own strength. Over the years, many Christian ministers have believed in God's promise to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). We can also agree with Paul's answer, "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

ON FAITH



NOTES

JOHN WESLEY, SERMON ONE HUNDRED SIX (SELECTED)

“Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 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 [reveals] 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 [revealed] 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 [descendants], that “the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.”

3. But above both the heathen and Jewish dispensation [historical order] 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 [historical order], “is greater than he.” By one that is


NOTES

under the Christian dispensation [historical order], 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.”

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 forever 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 [Muslims]. 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.”


NOTES

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 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 [Muslim]. 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 [calloused], 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 [historical order] 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,


NOTES

and a light in all their paths.”

They dare not, on any pretence [presumption], 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 [Muslim] 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 [made aware of the value] 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 [decency],) “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


NOTES

unto him, 'and you shall see greater things than these.'"

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 meantime, 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.


NOTES

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!"

Edited by Dave Rotz and George Lyons with corrections by Ryan Danker of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Idaho) for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology. © Copyright 1999 by the Wesley Center for Applied Theology. Text may be freely used for personal or scholarly purposes or mirrored on other websites, provided this notice is left intact. Any use of this material for commercial purposes of any kind is strictly forbidden without the express permission of the Wesley Center at Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID 83686. Contact webadmin@wesley.nnc.edu for permission or to report errors. Words inserted in [] are modern words that capture Wesley's ideas.

ENDNOTES

1. PRIMISE 2 (Sept. 27, 1995), 6. The article is used with permission from the September/ October 1995 issue of Modern Reformation, 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, 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**

1. 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 that 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 others 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

EXAM

**NOTES**

8. Involvement in issues of justice and mercy will detract from your effectiveness in communicating the gospel.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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 the participant raises 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 for effective evangelism in a religiously pluralistic world?