

A New S.T.A.R.T. for Personal Ministry

Effective steps to take to renew your passion for evangelism

Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is! I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in bad lands (Isaiah 43:18-19 MSG).

Evangelism is hard. It takes work and effort and intentionality. It doesn't happen without commitment. It seems evangelism is the first thing that goes when an individual or church faces controversy, problems, or challenges. It doesn't happen unless there is a concerted focus in our personal lives and in our churches.

Biblically, the word, *passion*, means to suffer as in the "passion of the Lord Jesus." It also has another meaning that is powerful. *Passion* also means "strong emotion." We need a strong emotion to know that God wants to use us to reach the lost. In short, we need a renewed *passion* for evangelism. Passion is a powerful force—changing our thoughts, our dreams, and our actions. It changes our lives, and it changes our churches. Let's get passionate about sharing the message of the gospel and seeing lost people saved. Let's be so passionate about evangelism that it changes the way we go about our lives every day.

Great soulwinners are not only great because of their technique; but they are also great because of their passion. One person with passion is better than forty who are merely interested. Here is a simple formula to help anyone regain their passion for evangelism.

S—Stop Making Excuses

Some people spend their entire lives making excuses for hurtful or wrongful behavior. Consider this example. A young man was arrested for stealing a car. When confronted by the police and asked for an explanation for his actions, he had the year's most novel excuse. He said, "I found the automobile in front of a cemetery and thought the owner was dead."

There is an old saying that there is an "I" in every accident and a "U" in every excuse. Proverbs 28:13 says it this way: "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance" (TLB).

The next time you feel like making an excuse for any inconsistency in your life consider some of the great heroes of the Bible. Here are some of the excuses they could have used for not being all that God wanted them to become.

Abraham was too old.
Isaac was a daydreamer.
Jacob was a liar.

Joseph was abused.
Moses had a stuttering problem.
Gideon was afraid.

Jeremiah and Timothy were too young.
 Elijah was suicidal.
 Jonah ran from God.
 Naomi was a widow.
 Job went bankrupt.
 John the Baptist ate bugs.
 Peter denied Christ.
 The Disciples fell asleep while praying.

Martha worried about everything.
 The Samaritan woman was divorced,
 more than once.
 Zacchaeus was too small.
 Paul was too religious.
 Timothy had an ulcer.
 Lazarus was dead!

What do you have that's worse than these? No more excuses!

T—Take stock

Perhaps our present circumstances do not reflect the true purpose of God for our lives. We have to be prepared to go onward and upward for Christ. Sometimes the biggest miracle can be in the smallest opportunity. God's best blessings sometimes come in surprise packages.

In Galatians 3:4, Paul says, "Did all your experience mean nothing at all? Surely it meant something!" (TEV). As we go through our daily lives, perhaps we should ask some questions about where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going. Here are some examples:

What have I learned?
 What are my assets?
 Who can help me?
 What is God doing in and around my life?

A—Act in faith

Matthew 9:29 says, "According to your faith will it be done to you." We get what we expect. Our expectations affect our future. If we act in faith, we must do something. We must make preparations for each new year but trust God to do His work in our lives. Proverbs 16:9 says, "We should make plans counting on God to direct us" (TLB). Here are some examples of goals that we can set:

- personal (physical, mental, spiritual)
- relational (family, marriage, children, friends)
- professional, church and personal ministry
- financial

R—Refocus

As we set and reach new goals for life, we may notice that our minds as well as our behavior will change. Let the Word of God renew your mind this year. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts" (GNT). In Romans 12:2, Paul says, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by

changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is” (NLT).

Have you ever wondered why a pigeon walks so funny? According to an interesting article in the Detroit Free Press, a pigeon walks the way it does so it can see where it’s going. Because it can’t adjust its focus as it moves, the pigeon actually has to bring its head to a complete stop between steps in order to refocus. This is the way it walks: head forward, stop; head back, stop.

In our spiritual walk with the Lord, we have the same problem as the pigeon. We have a hard time seeing while we’re moving. We also need to stop between steps—to refocus on where we are in relation to the World and the will of God. Our walk with the Lord needs to have a built-in pattern of “stops,” which enable us to see more clearly before moving on.

T—Talk to God.

Let Him show you us His plan to reach the lost with the gospel message. Pray for open doors of ministry. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us to a place of service in your churches and communities. As our scripture says, “Be alert, be present.” God is about to do something new and great. Don’t miss out on His plan for us. Get involved and be ready.

Years ago, Robert Schuller, a great author and pastor said, “Find a need and fill it; find a hurt and heal it.” Dr. Karl Menninger, the famous psychiatrist, once gave a lecture on mental health and was answering questions from the audience. “What would you advise a person to do,” asked one man, “if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?” Most people expected him to reply: “Consult a psychiatrist.” To their astonishment, he replied: “Lock up your house, go across the railway tracks, find someone in need and do something to help that person.”