HOW NOT TO GIVE AWAY YOUR FAITH

Posted on March 7, 2017 by Eddie

One of the reasons why I'll never be a good personal evangelist...
Category: Christian Life

If the truth be told, my feelings about personal evangelism are very similar to Jerome K. Jerome's view of work; I love it and could watch it for hours. I knowÂ that it is important for individual Christians to witness to their faith and I try to do it, but I'm actually not very good at it and would rather leave it to those for whom it is both a gift and a passion.

When I became a Christian in the mid-seventies, I desperately wanted to share my new found faith with my mates at school, but I had even less of a clue how to do it then than I do now. Filled with enthusiasm, I cycled to the Christian book shop and got hold of a book calledÂ How to give away your faithÂ (which is very good). A few days later, the church pastor came to visit my mother and I took the opportunity to show him my exciting new book. His reply rocked me at the time and still leaves me feeling shocked and surprised forty years later.

> *You have to learn your faith before you can give it away.*

This short response had two effects on me. Firstly, it killed off any desire or enthusiasm to tell my friends about Jesus. It was years before I got back to reading my book or trying to explain why I was a Christian. Secondly, it told me that, above everything, Christianity is a thing of the mind; somethingÂ to be studied, learned and understood. Books on personal evangelism, soon gave way to books of systematic theology on my shelves.

However, sound doctrine cannot be separated from Christian practice. The one must inform the other. When we share our faith with others, our theology and understanding can give us a basis to build on. Equally, the questions that people ask provides us with the opportunity to reflect on what we have learned and to deepen our understanding. Above everything else, by stepping out of our comfort zones, we find ourselves being stretched and our faith and personal knowledge of God is extended. Â Learning your faith and giving it away are intimately entwined.

I was undoubtedly naive and over enthusiastic when I bought my evangelism book, but had I been encouraged to share my faith and to reflect on the process, I'd have learned things about my faith that I could never have picked up by reading.

I should say at the end of this post, that I owe a great deal to that particular pastor; there is much more to his ministryÂ than one throw-away line spoken to a teenager during a pastoral visit.

If you saw the picture on the front of this post (or on Facebook), it was taken about five years after the events in this story, but it's the most contemporary digital picture I have.