

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Evangelism

During the past 50 years, people in the U.S. and Western Europe have become increasingly hardened to the gospel message. Today, I rarely meet anyone who, when presented with the gospel, immediately wants to get saved. Increasingly, our challenge is to help those who are hostile or indifferent to the gospel to at least consider it.

This past month, we joined New Hope Christian Fellowship (Sacramento) in witnessing at the Whole Earth Festival in Davis, CA. Several Christian groups had set up booths and were witnessing at this new-age oriented event. New Hope was offering face painting and photographs, and doing “religious interest” surveys. We found many people were open to talking with us about Christ. However, I do not know of anyone who was saved at that event.

I spoke with about 50 people that afternoon, with conversations averaging 15 minutes. Sometimes I spoke with a group of 5 or 6 people at a time. Most of those I spoke with were high school or college students. Two girls said they were Christians, but neither had witnessed to her friends. A lot of people were sitting on the grass. I would walk up to a group, offer them gospel tracts, and start a conversation. I would say that the tracts were about Jesus Christ, and ask what they thought about Him. Usually one or more persons would tell me about their religious beliefs. I would listen to them, then tell them what I believe. Most were receptive to the idea that sin is the cause of the world’s problems. I used the example of two children fighting over a toy—something that seems built into their nature, not something they were taught to do. This selfishness causes divorce, crime and war. Jesus Christ is the only totally unselfish person who ever lived. He came to give us a new nature, based upon love instead of selfishness. I pointed to the demonstration of Jesus’ supernatural love for his enemies as portrayed in *The Passion*.

Next, I shared some of my testimony, that I was raised in a non-religious Jewish home, that I was quite skeptical of all religions and that I went to college and graduate school. I told them about my experiences with drugs and Eastern religions. I told them how I met a Christian who showed me prophecies in the Jewish Bible that were fulfilled by Jesus. I told them about some of them. No mere human can predict the future (even a few days from now) with perfect accuracy. If they could, they could make unlimited amounts of money—in the stock market or by gambling. Yet the Bible predicts events hundreds of years in the future with perfect accuracy. This distinguishes Christianity from every other religion.

At this point, someone usually brought up an objection. Several said they thought it didn’t matter what someone believed. One mentioned Nostradamus’ “prophecies.” I tried to answer their questions. [Note: Most of Nostradamus’ “prophecies” are so vague that they could mean almost anything. One of the few clear prophecies he made was that plagues, famines and wars would cause vast depopulation of the world by 1732. This never happened. No clear prophesy of Nostradamus was correct.] Soon it became clear that our conversation had reached an end. They didn’t want to hear any more, so I thanked them for talking with me and left. Most likely, the Holy Spirit was convicting them of sin as they were considering the possibility that

Christianity is actually true. They were getting uncomfortable and wanted me to leave. The most difficult challenge we have in evangelism is helping someone move from the place where they are hostile or indifferent to the gospel to the place where they are willing to consider the possibility that Christianity is true. At that point, God can deal with them and bring them to salvation. It is hard to have a long conversation about Christ on the street, because most people are in a hurry. However, people in parks are usually not in a hurry. Many are willing to talk with you. Special events such as the Whole Earth Festival are also good for getting into conversations. I prefer to talk with young people, because they are usually less set in their beliefs. If you ask someone questions and listen to them, they will usually be willing to listen to you. Try to avoid arguments. Share with them what you believe and why you believe it. If I sense that someone sees their need for a savior and wants to receive Christ, I will pray with them for salvation. Otherwise, I might ask if I can pray with them for some other need. When I sense someone no longer wishes to talk with me, I thank them for the conversation and leave.