

“Sharing Jesus Without Fear”
A Critical Book Review

by

Donald Linscott

Personal Evangelism

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ENCOURAGING BELIEVERS TO ADOPT A NEW MINDSET

William Fay skillfully communicates a new measurement for success to an American church audience that has been influenced by societal measures rather than biblical standards. Fay's measurement for success in personal evangelism is not in the result, not in the number of conversions or the method of communication but instead rests on Christians being vocal and active in sharing their faith.

In an American culture where society tracks success with graphs and charts measuring sales, units produced and measurable results, Fay's message is an encouragement to Christians who, he says, must understand that their biblical evangelistic responsibility is simply to share while trusting God to bring His desired result.

Fay claims that only 5 to 10 percent of evangelicals have shared their faith in the past year.¹ This reader doubted the validity of that assertion, however, and would have liked to know the source of the data. Written in a conversational tone rather than as an academic text, *Sharing Jesus Without Fear* lacks sufficient footnotes and end notes for readers who doubt Fay's findings. This reader's experience as an evangelical pastor of more than 20 years leads him to believe that Fay may have been too generous in his estimate.

¹ William Fay, *Sharing Jesus Without Fear* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 6.

Whether 5 to 10 percent or lower, Fay is correct in identifying a major problem facing the church of Jesus Christ in that it is either unwilling or unprepared to share the message of the gospel in clear and effective ways. Fay's words are strong when he points out the "sin of silence" and says failure to share the gospel or be around the lost, sick or dying as signs of a dying Christian life.²

Rather than dwell on the failings of Christians, Fay adeptly and quickly moves into showing an exciting and rewarding Christian walk which lies ahead when believers understand their role as sharers and God's role of turning hearts toward Himself. After making a case for testifying for Christ, he works to equip his readers with a user-friendly and easily-memorized approach that will open up conversations and lead to opportunities for sharing. Fay recommends five non-threatening, open-ended questions³ that are designed to get people thinking and talking about spiritual things and provide believers the opportunity to share scripture. Fay shows his understanding of the authority of Scripture when he identifies that this is what the Lord uses to speak to the hearts of men.⁴ This reader was most impressed when Fay relayed an encounter with the demonic where he simply ignored the demon and continued to have the person he was sharing with reread the scripture passage until it took hold and defeated the enemy.⁵ This was especially refreshing in light of the current extrabiblical spiritual warfare techniques espoused by numerous modern authors.

² Ibid., 6-7.

³ Ibid., 32-33.

⁴ Ibid., 41-42.

⁵ Ibid., 53.

Fay's approach is simple and effective. This reader had the opportunity to use his five questions just a couple nights ago and found that they did indeed lead to an opportunity for a clear presentation of the gospel. It is important to note, however, that Fay is careful to point out that it is not always the case. He is clear that some will reject the conversation or shut things down quickly. Fay again reminds his readers that they have been successful because they have been obedient. Fay says that it takes people an average of 7.6 times of hearing the gospel presentation before making a decision for Christ.

After helping readers understand their responsibility to share and then giving them effective questions to begin conversations, Fay moves into equipping them with a literal manual and step-by-step counsel for leading someone to Jesus. Fay provides readers with key scriptures that he insists that they have the people they are sharing with read and then answer the question, "What does that say to you?"⁶ Fay's manual also provides readers with answers to objections and helps them identify issues that tend to pull focus off of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Christians who feel like sales professionals working to "close the deal" when sharing their faith are likely to find *Share Jesus Without Fear* too scripted for their tastes. These readers, however, are encouraged to take a serious look at their approach to evangelism. This reader suspects that most succumb to the "sin of silence" that Fay

⁶ Ibid., 42.

identifies and expect that their Christianity will be passed by osmosis or a weak form of what they call “lifestyle evangelism.” Fay’s approach is worthy of consideration even when believers modify it to fit with their own personal styles.

Christians who commit the Scripture Fay recommends to memory will find themselves ready to share no matter where they are. However, his counsel to carry a pocket-sized bible should not be dismissed. Having people read God’s Word firsthand is powerful.

Familiarizing oneself with Fay’s techniques will take some work. While some might be tempted to carry the book with them as a reference to turn to in the face of objections or difficulties, doing so would be a mistake. People do not want to feel like they are a notch on a belt. The information presented will only be well-received if the hearer senses Christ in the person sharing with them.

The weaknesses in *Share Jesus Without Fear* are few but significant. Readers may see it as a formula and miss the importance of backing up their message with other important and proven tools for evangelism such as empathetic listening, valuing people and demonstrating the heart of Jesus. Fay’s work is light on these aspects and heavy on presenting information and directing conversations to a closing. In telling his readers that listeners normally must hear a gospel presentation 7.6 times before making a decision for Christ, Fay is perhaps putting too much emphasis on presenting information at the expense of servant evangelism, incarnational apologetics and relationship.

Still, this reader believes that *Sharing Jesus Without Fear* contains useful and practical information and methods that, even when modified, will help Christians get beyond the obstacles to sharing their faith and begin experiencing the excitement of

seeing God working through them. Fay's suggestions and methods are put into proper perspective toward the end of his work when he summarizes everything through the lens of the importance of prayer.⁷

Of course, without a focus on application and planned opportunities to put new skills to the test, Fay's book will have little impact on the church or believer. Like numerous others Christian books, DVD's and videos taught in churches and small groups every week, without a focus on application and a plan for action, *Share Jesus Without Fear* will find its place alongside all the others on the shelves of church libraries under the heading, "Used Curriculum."

Fay ends his book with a faith sharing assignment in the appendix. Pastors, teachers and leaders who skip over this assignment will miss out on a terrific opportunity to give their students a powerful laboratory experience that will encourage them to continue using their new skills and reaching others for Jesus Christ.

⁷ Ibid., 129-138.

WORKS CITED

William Fay. *Sharing Jesus Without Fear*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.