



“Cell-ing the Gospel”

Larry Dixon, Ph.D.

Professor of Theology - Columbia Biblical Seminary & School of Missions

“Yes, of course!” the African-American lady said, “I can meet you at 4pm today. And, Sweetie, please make sure that you bring the paperwork with you.”

I was standing in line at the local post office and had no idea who the woman was who was talking to me. I said, “Excuse me?” She turned her head slightly, somewhat annoyed that a total stranger had spoken to her, and then I saw it: a thin black wire attached to a small earpiece. She had been talking with someone on her cell phone. Someone that was named “Sweetie.” And that someone was not me.

Our culture has taken a massive turn for the worse. When cell phones first came out, people would politely excuse themselves when it rang and go outside to “take this call.” Now they talk, in a normal voice, wherever they find themselves, and thoroughly confuse the rest of us who also might carry these modern marvelous quiet-disturbing contraptions. It appears that rudeness reigns; no one whispers into their cell phones (or their wired thingies). They simply carry on a normal voiced-conversation, confusing people like myself who think we’re being addressed as “Sweetie.”

Then it dawned on me! We can turn this contemporary phenomenon of cultural impoliteness to the Kingdom’s advantage! We can get our own wired thingies, plug them into our ears, and carry on strategic, scripted conversations in public. But – and here’s the really brilliant idea – we can pretend to be speaking with someone on the other end of the line, but actually be witnessing to the nearest PICV (“Person in Cell phone Vicinity”). And we don’t even have to have a contract with a cellular company. The wired thingy doesn’t have to really work!

Here are some ideas I’ve come up with for wireless witnessing:

(1) You find yourself standing in line in the local post office. Your conversation goes something like this: “Yes, my dear, I understand your objection. But the Good News about Jesus Christ is really simple. It’s as simple as A-B-C. ‘A’ stands for the fact that you must accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. ‘B’ indicates that you must believe that He died for you. And ‘C’ refers to the fact that you must confess your sins to Him and ask Him into your heart. Yes, I know, Dear. I know you’ve seen

some hypocrites in churches. But you'll never find any fault with Jesus . . .”

(2) Waiting in the DMV line to renew your driver's license: “What do you mean my Uncle Harold has passed away?! Did you have a chance to share the gospel with him, Pastor, before he went? You did? That's wonderful. So you told him about his need of forgiveness? Yes. And you explained how Jesus loved him and died for Him? That's great. And he turned to Jesus and prayed that the Lord would come into his life? Wow. And then he passed away? You say there was a big smile on his face when he died? Uh, excuse me, Pastor. But my number has just been called at the DMV. I'll call you back later . . .”

(3) Shopping at a local Wal*Mart®, late on a Friday night: “Hello. Yes, this is he. You say I've won the million dollar Publishers' Clearinghouse Grand Prize?! That's terrific! Praise the Lord! I want to use the money to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, you're a what? Uh huh. How long have you been a Muslim? Do you mind if I ask you what your opinion is of Jesus? Just a great prophet, you say? Did you know that Jesus claimed to be equal with God? I know. I know. That sounds like blasphemy to you, but if Jesus was not God, He could not have paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. You say that Islam teaches that Jesus did not actually die on the cross? Really? Well, there's strong evidence from Tacitus, a Roman historian, that Jesus was executed during the reign of Pontius Pilate. Could we get together this week for lunch to talk about Jesus? Sure, we can meet when you come to bring me my check. That's great . . .”

(4) In an elevator going up to the 101st floor of an office building: “Hello. Is this the Glenn Beck radio program? Mr. Beck, how nice to speak with you! Mr. Beck, I know that you are a Mormon. I've read your web page and I'm glad that you've gotten off drugs and are now happily married. But, Mr. Beck, as much as I respect many of your opinions, could we talk for a moment about the differences between what the Bible says about Jesus and what the Mormon Scriptures (“The Book of Mormon,” “The Pearl of Great Price,” and “Doctrines and Covenants”) teach about Him? Both views can't be right, you know . . .”

Anyway, these are some of my ideas of how Christians can respond to the contemporary obsession with publicly carried on one-sided cell phone calls. I'd love to give you a few more ideas, but [ring! ring!], I've got to take this call . . . See you at the post office.

© 2006 – Larry Dixon.

For permission to reprint, please contact Dr. Dixon at: LDixon@ciu.edu