

Ten Evangelistic lessons

I've just returned to Italy, and this past Sunday, my first since my arrival here, I went out evangelizing. Let me share some of the lessons which I am learning about evangelizing.

Lesson #1 – evangelizing is not limited to just certain places

As I'm sitting down to write this update, and share mostly about this past Sunday's evangelistic endeavor, it made me think . . . so, why could I not also evangelize regularly and write these kind of evangelistic updates from the States? Well, of course, there's no reason why I couldn't. I could just as well be laying this down before the Lord, seeking to fulfill my purpose of being salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt. 5:13,14) while I am in the States as when I'm in Italy. Writing these musings out sometimes serve as a great reminder and exhortation for me to grow in this area. Would you pray for my growth in sharing Christ with others in the States as well?

Lesson #2 – the need to battle wrong thinking with biblical truth

This past Sunday, in order to provide me with a ride to Rovigo so that I could evangelize, Marco and Sherrie didn't take their bikes. This was extremely generous of them (it's certainly slower to get around by walking) but I have to confess that the thought crossed my mind “well, maybe it'd just be easier if I don't go evangelize.” I almost convinced myself to “kindly” refuse their offer by “graciously” suggesting they take their bikes and I'd go another time. There is war for our thoughts! Thoughts which sprout from seeds of sin: fear or a lack of faith or laziness. I'm so grateful in the end that God didn't leave me there and that I had a ride to Rovigo. Naturally, He was at work from the start.

Lesson #3 – alone doesn't mean alone

Well, God is a God of second chances. I find it appropriate that after my last time out evangelizing in Italy before I returned to the USA in late June, I was able to go out this past Sunday and evangelize alone once again. Oh, and how the Lord answered prayer! He alone deserves the glory for how it went on Sunday because I had a boldness that surprised even me at the end of the evening.

Dori is still working on Sunday afternoons and it looks as though it will be that way for a while. Martina has started school and has mentioned that she wants to grow in being a light for Christ at school. Please join us in praying for her in this. She might be able to come at times but it's difficult to organize due to the Sunday train schedule. However, the Lord doesn't see this as an obstacle and can work even in this. We'll wait and see how He provides.

News Flash: This is incredible!! In the short time since I wrote this, I found out that Marco and Sherrie have purchased a car for my use. It should be ready in the coming days. So, God has provided for the weekly transportation problem. Look at the goodness of our heavenly Father! Truly, may this car be used for His glory.

Lesson #4 – love: sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and the “right” approach

We had just parked the car and had started the walk towards the center of Rovigo when I spotted a girl

walking by herself. Now was the time to start sharing or it might not have happened at all . . . So, needless to say, I dove in a bit eagerly. I darted after the girl and began to ask her how she was doing and whether she was from Rovigo. Yes, I need to grow in my approach! Any one of us would have probably reacted the way she did if an eager foreigner came up to us asking several questions with no context! She put up a wall immediately. I guess that clued me in to the fact that I was a little overbearing;-) So, I began to share a bit about myself. She warmed up instantly and shared that her name is Laura. We got cut short because she arrived at work and I didn't even have time to get her a tract. However, it was a start. Perhaps the Lord will provide another opportunity.

Lesson #5 – God will have His way despite us

Marco is preparing to teach a family course in October and we are inviting people to attend. Please pray for him and his preparation in this. God used the family course in Adriano and Roberta Vigo's lives over 14 years ago. That was their first introduction to the gospel. We pray they won't be the last ones who will hear the good news of Jesus Christ through this course!

One of the most in-depth and encouraging conversations of the evening was with two women in their mid-40s. I approached Em (I couldn't catch her full name so I'll refer to her as Em) and Tiziana with the family course in mind. They had many questions at first and that provided an opportunity to talk about the reason for the course (how to build good relationships with others) and that all the material would be based on the Word of God. I then was able to talk with them about the most important relationship: a personal one with Jesus Christ. Em was a bit mystical in her approach to God. She talked of signs and the feeling inside when God is with you and the belief that she could “do” spirituality on her own. Tiziana was smiling but said that all that God stuff was okay for Em but it wasn't for her. So I sought to encourage Em to get to know God through who HE says He is in His Word and to encourage Tiziana to seek God while there was still today. However, I definitely danced around in conversation before getting to those points. I believe that God can use even some of the muddle which I started with but I do want to grow in listening and speaking the truth more clearly, not falling into seeking others' approval. I pray that I see them again. From what they said, they just may come to the family course!

Lesson #6 – the lovingkindness of God

After that I saw three teenage girls and was able to share about Christ with them . . . in English! Two of them were studying linguistics but they all understood English very well. I knew they understood because the moment I mentioned a relationship with Jesus Christ, Anna Maria's countenance changed – oh, I understand, she said. They received the information I gave them on the course and expressed some half-hearted interest but God can even use less interest than that to draw others to Himself! How kind of God to allow me to “ease into” evangelizing in Italian after nearly 3 months away by giving me a chance to share in English!

Lesson #7 – giggles don't hurt you

I was able to give out several tracts along the way to couples and groups and individuals. Although some accepted, there were also several who refused to even acknowledge my presence and two girls suppressed their giggles as I was talking with them. But giggles and refusal really don't hurt. I always think they will but they don't . . . when (and only when) I'm reminded that my Father's approval is all the approval I need and He is pleased when I walk in obedience to Him.

Lesson #8 – the importance of Scripture memorization

I continue to learn the invaluable lesson of not entering into meaningless debates. Marta was with her two friends and almost immediately began talking about the validity of evolution and science and Darwin. She refused to believe that God exists. Why did bad things happen if He was a good God, she wanted to know. However, she didn't truly want to listen. After several minutes, trying to discuss back and forth, I saw the futility and finally said that whether we believed in Jesus Christ or not, we would have to give an account to Him for our lives and that His Word and the life He has given us were both great graces from Him, allowing us the chance to get to know Him as Savior and Lord before it was too late. That conversation taught me more, however, than not just entering into debates, but the importance of having Scripture memorized in order to point someone to Christ and their hopeless condition before God.

Lesson #9 - the goodness of God

The Lord provided Brunella, Valentina and Samantha as another good in-depth conversation. We talked about that which was most important in life, and although Samantha shut down at that point, Brunella continued to follow what I was sharing, with raised eyebrows and a half smile. Oh, the goodness of God in simply providing someone to listen. Not for my sake but for theirs. May the gospel have a saving effect on their lives!

Lesson #10 - the door isn't always closed and prayer is powerful

I gave a few more tracts out and then I heard Marco and Sherrie beckoning me from an outdoor caffè where they were sitting with Cleopatra and Chiara. You may remember from one of Marco and Sherrie's updates this summer that Cleo (56) and Chiara (38) had come over for a 5 hour Bible study at the end of August. Cleo was going to try to come to the Bible study that following Wednesday but didn't show. This should be a wonderful encouragement for all of you who have been praying for them! Cleo, especially, does not seem closed although she is using time as an excuse for not seeking to know God. She was clearly uneasy and without peace, and seemed to realize that what she has heard is the truth. Chiara is sweet and friendly and doesn't seem as interested, however, they did want to spend time with Marco and Sherrie and meet me. This was used of God to remind us of His continued work.

As I close, I want to share a prayer request which I've mentioned before but which bears repeating because there's still lots of room for growth! Please pray that I persevere in prayer. I need to grow in this and in laying down each of these conversations and the sharing of the gospel and the desire that the Lord opens hearts, before the holy God, who actually hears the prayers of His people! Amazing. I also realized, after going out this past Sunday, that I need to be more clear in my evangelizing about who God is, particularly His holiness. Please pray for my growth in sharing clearly.

Thank you for what you do (your e-mails, your prayers, your support) and what this reveals about that which is most important: who you are in Christ. The Lord has blessed me with such sweet relationships! I thank Him for you!

Through it all, the sweetest lesson is this: Christ is my Redeemer, not by any merit of my own, but by the sole grace of God!

Grateful to God for His lessons,
Ashley

2 Corinthians 4:5,6 - For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.