

Book Analysis Assignment: *Share Jesus Without Fear*

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Bibliographic Entry

Fay, William, and Linda Evans Shepherd. *Share Jesus Without Fear*. Bielefeld: B&H Publishing Group, 1999.

Summary

In *Share Jesus Without Fear*, William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd lay out a straightforward, non-combative method of sharing the Gospel with unbelievers. As Fay pointed out, neither can you fail with this method, nor can you really succeed. For Fay, the five Share Jesus questions, the seven Share Jesus Scriptures, and the five Commitment Questions are the core of the process. When believers obey the Great Commission and share their faith, that is the goal. Each of the questions is designed to avoid a debate and allow unbelievers to speak the Bible aloud so God can open their ears to hear and their hearts to receive salvation. Fay's process allows the Holy Spirit to take the front seat and turns the focus on the timeless truths of the Bible and away from potential arguments and objections.

After outlining the general process and principles of sharing your faith without fear, Fay provides follow up questions and reinforcement thoughts to assist new believers on their journey. Fay also provides some ready responses to common objections that people have with the Gospel that are helpful in avoiding confrontation while redirecting their attention to the Bible. In the final three chapters, Fay provides ideas for how to develop and keep non-Christian friends, teaches believers how to pray for nonbelievers, and encourages readers to get started with sharing their faith.

Strengths

The strength of the book is the simplistic, formulaic approach to sharing the Christian faith. Asking questions is a disarming and penetrating way to share the Gospel without risk of offense or conflict. The five questions give the believer personal and cultural context while

allowing the unbeliever to share openly and not go on the offensive. By having the person read the Bible passages aloud, the believer can guide the unbeliever to the truth of God's word. Then, the Holy Spirit can do His work, when the believer asks, "What does it say to you?"¹ This approach gives unbelievers the opportunity to decide for themselves to believe the words of Scripture. Fay's guidance for believers to simply shut up and pray after asking the final commitment question is also important: "Are you ready to invite Jesus into your life and into your heart?"

I think another strength of the book is the actual Share Jesus Scriptures. While I have not used John 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:15 in Gospel presentations before, I will now. Fay outlines how effective these two Scriptures are in helping people understand that they must be born-again as well as surrender their lives to Christ. Finally, Fay shows the sheer speed at which the Gospel can be delivered to an unbeliever. Too often, I have felt like sharing the Gospel takes time. However, walking in lifestyle evangelism, the Gospel can be shared quickly and effectively.

Weaknesses

The book's strengths are closely connected with its weaknesses. The brevity of the Gospel presentation means that believers need to have these basic questions memorized. While the Scripture verses can be written down in a Bible, the five introductory questions and five commitment questions can be a lot to memorize for people more familiar with the Romans Road or other "witnessing" texts in the Bible. The process is sound though. By asking these questions, believers can disarm a confrontation before it ever happens. The final commitment questions help to guide the person to make the decision for themselves.

¹ William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, *Share Jesus Without Fear* (Bielefeld: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 52.

While I think the follow up questions and reinforcement thoughts that Fay provides are good, I think there is more that can be done here. Also, Fay's book seems to be targeted more towards believers who are not currently sharing their faith. It is unclear when this formulaic approach should be taught to a new believer or even a young believer for them to use to witness. Responding to some of the common objections requires some knowledge beyond the seven Scriptures. To know whether an unbeliever reading the seven texts gives the "correct" answer may require more knowledge than a new believer initially has. New believers should share what Jesus has done for them and evangelize the lost, but this formulaic approach may prove difficult at first. For students younger than sixteen, it might not be a good approach at all. For a grounded believer though, the approach is incredible.

Favorite Quotes

Below are my favorite quotes from each chapter (the number is the chapter) as well as my reflections on them.

1. 3: "Success is sharing your faith and living your life for Jesus Christ. It has nothing whatsoever to do with bringing anyone to the Lord. It has everything to do with obedience." I was deeply moved both in the video lectures this week as well as the chapter because we simply cannot fail when we share our faith. Obedience is not failure. In the same way, we cannot succeed either because then that would steal God's glory.
2. 7: "You will become keepers of a Christian aquarium instead of fishers of men. Your church will be on the way to spiritual death." The sin of silence is debilitating to the church today. It is so important that we share our faith with others, and we must remember that we were once drowning as well until someone shared the Good News with us! As Fay put it: We need to be fishers of men and not caretakers of a Christian aquarium, and we need to throw "life preservers" and not just "hints" to the people who are drowning in their sin.
3. 19: "There is no success, no failure, in God's kingdom when people choose obedience. In fact, this is the one area of your Christian life you ultimately cannot botch. Even if you share stupidly, unlovingly, or with poor timing, our heavenly Father can use it. What he can't use is your silence." The thought that we can neither succeed nor fail when we share our faith is freeing. We are only required to follow Jesus's command to "Go" and

share. It is the Holy Spirit's job to do the rest. I also liked how this tied into the story of Dwight Moody correcting the person who said that he was one of Moody's converts.

4. 33: "1. Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?
2. To you, who is Jesus Christ?
3. Do you think there is a heaven or hell?
4. If you died, where would you go? If heaven, why?
5. If what you are believing is not true, would you want to know?" I will be using these five questions when I share my faith. They are simple, straightforward, and non-combative. They also get to the heart of relational Christianity faster than any other way I have seen, and the questions are disarming. Unlike other methods, they do not put people on the defensive.

5. 42: "'What does this say to you?' is a question. It is not a defense or an argument. All you have to do is listen to your friend's answer. Your only job is to turn pages and to stay out of God's way. The Holy Spirit will help your friend understand more from a simple reading of a verse than any explanation or sermon you could have preached." This is such an invigorating way to share our faith. We are only responsible to open people's eyes to the pages of the Bible and letting God do the rest. Oftentimes, I have had all the salvation verses memorized and presented them instead of letting someone read them aloud. However, building from the principles in Romans 10:17 and Luke 10:26, the Word of God alone is much more powerful and effective in the Gospel presentation because it allows the Holy Spirit room to work.

6. 62: The Five Commitment Questions
 1. "Are you a sinner?"
 2. Do you want forgiveness of sins?
 3. Do you believe Jesus died on the cross for you and rose again?
 4. Are you willing to surrender your life to Jesus Christ?
 5. Are you ready to invite Jesus into your life and into your heart?" These commitment questions are as straightforward as the verses, and they operate as a spiritual thermometer. They pave the way for getting someone to decide to receive and accept Christ. I particularly liked the idea that the wall that God could not break was that of a human heart. He does not force His way in, but He is always ready to come in if we will let Him. Fay's reminder after the last question is very important too: please shut up and pray. I am thankful that Fay included a sinner's prayer in the book: "Heavenly Father, I have sinned against you. I want forgiveness for all my sins. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me and rose again. Father, I give you my life to do with as you wish. I want Jesus Christ to come into my life and into my heart. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen."² I am also thankful that he writes and shares in the video lectures that the sinner's prayer does not save anyone; Jesus does that!

² Ibid., 148.

7. 72: “To abandon a new believer would be like leaving a baby in a blizzard.” The ten reinforcing and follow up thoughts and questions are very important. If we do not walk alongside new believers, their faith will not get off to a good start. 1. How many sins has Christ paid for? 2. How many of your sins does Christ remember? 3. Where does Christ live? 3. Let’s pray. 5. Who has been praying for you? 6. Do you know where your friend goes to church? 7. Do you know your friend’s phone number? Let’s call him now! 8. May I take you to church? 9. Read the Gospel of John. 10. I will call you tomorrow to see if the Word became different. These thoughts and questions show genuine care and deep concern for another person. I especially liked the leading question about if they know where their friend goes to church. It is very important for people to be a part of a body of believers that learns and lives from the Bible.

8. 81: “The ‘Why Principle’ will work for us. Never assume you know the reason why a person is not ready to accept Christ. Instead, ask, ‘Why?’” It is the only way to get your friend to burp up his real issues.” This principle extends our conversation with unbelievers and allows the Holy Spirit to continue His work. It is so important that we continue to shine our light gently, even as people are struggling with making this all-important decision. The question also ensures that people do not become too defensive in the process.

9. 115: “God did not call you to hide from the world. He called you to go into the world.” In the past ten years, I have made many more non-Christian friends. I have felt God’s call to witness, and I have attempted to do so, but arguments have been plentiful. Sharing my faith is one of the reasons I went to a state school and not to a Christian university for my undergraduate studies. I think we must always remember that our mission is for the lost in the world. It calls back to the picture that we should be fishers of men on the vast ocean and not just Christians stuck in an aquarium.

10. 130: “It’s simple: if you don’t ask, you don’t get. We can enter into the heart of God only through prayer.” Prayer is just that powerful. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” In the busyness of work, life, school, and church, I have sometimes forgotten this all-important principle. I will go back to praying the prayer: “God, give me the strength to do what you’ve called me to do, and the wisdom to know what not to do.” It is a great reminder to depend on God’s peace and strength.

11. 141: “When we live our lives with a love-my-neighbor policy, we will take advantage of the opportunities God puts before us.” This lifestyle evangelism is so important for people to be able to see Christ in us. Lifestyle evangelism includes verbally sharing the Gospel as well. Fay defined it like this: “lifestyle evangelism is when we live our lives in a way that is open, vulnerable, caring, and matched by equal amounts of integrity and

character.”³ We must be ready to share our faith through words and speech, but also with “actions and in truth” (I John 3:18, New International Version). A life of love naturally prepares people to hear, accept, and receive the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Lessons Learned

1. Use the Bible and say, “What does it say to you?” I think in the past I have had what Fay called “Spiritual Constipation.” I have simply tried to know too much about God before sharing my faith. The idea that I can just ask questions and point people to a text in the Bible to share my faith is invigorating. There is no pressure to share my faith, only opportunity to share what the Bible says. In fact, I am only sharing the Biblical texts and not telling them the memorized passages of Scripture at all. By asking basically the same question that Jesus asked, “What does it say to you?” I am letting the Holy Spirit do His work.

2. There is no success and no failure, only obedience. I have felt pressure and failure in the past in my evangelism encounters. My responsibility is not for someone to accept the Gospel; my only responsibility is to share the Gospel. This lesson is freeing. I just need to share the Gospel, and God will do the rest. All I must do to share the Gospel is to use the five share Jesus questions, the scriptures passages, and the commitment questions. All these tools are helpful in disarming non-believers and getting them in a place where they can choose Jesus. I now walk in freedom and joy to share my faith without fear with a method designed to avoid confrontation and aid conversation.

3. On page 116, Fay talks about how there are no coincidences. Every moment of our lives is ordained by God and an opportunity for us to share the Gospel through word and deed. I think I have been aware of these divine opportunities in the past, but now I have a better process for how to not have an argument. Instead, by asking questions, I can have a conversation and

³ Ibid., 126.

introduce them to Jesus. Jesus is the one knocking (Revelation 3:20). He always has been; I am just the person that needs to tell them that someone is at the door. I shared the Gospel with a fourteen-year-old boy at church who had gotten into quite a bit of trouble. While he was not receptive to the Gospel message, I am praying for him and stand ready to share again. He just might be on step 6.6 to share the Gospel. After all, it takes on average 7.6 times for someone to hear the Gospel before they accept it.

4. Fay talks about organizing an Evangelistic Block Party with the North American Mission Board at 1-800-233-1123. I will be contacting Tim Knopps at the Timothy Ministry Institute at 405-478-2186 to set up an event like this at my church. While events like this are not necessarily as successful percentage wise as one-on-one personal encounters, I think they can be beneficial. We are planning a Fall Festival event in conjunction with a Samaritan's Feet project. I think combining these events, or just having them back-to-back will be a good way for our church to engage our community.

5. As a kids' pastor, I will be teaching my kids the "Share Jesus" method. The five questions, seven Scriptures, and five commitment questions are straightforward and simple. Even a child can understand and apply it to their lives. Rather than the pressure of making a Gospel presentation with memorized Scriptures, the kids only must remember where to find Romans 3:23 in their Bible. I have also written these verses in a note on my iPhone to share the Scriptures more easily from anywhere. I will encourage the kids in my church to do the same in their phones and tablets. That way, they can easily switch from playing a game on their technological device to sharing the Gospel!

6. I need to share Christ, “not out of duty, but out of love.”⁴ Fay wrote, “Love makes all the difference.”⁵ As a person in professional ministry, sometimes faith feels like a duty. While my faith has not become cold, it is not as warm as it used to be given the many pressures of life. I will ask God to give me some of “his for others, to help me see their brokenness and pain, and to hear their cries.”⁶ God can increase my love for others and open my eyes to the mission in front of me, giving me renewed energy to spread the Gospel and complete what He has called me to do.

⁴ Ibid., 133.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.