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# SOLA FIDE

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## The Good News

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a Scottish evangelist by the name of John Harper, accompanied by his sister and six-year-old daughter, boarded a ship in England bound for New York. He had been invited to speak at The Moody Church in Chicago, Illinois. Unfortunately, Mr. Harper never made it to his destination. His ship sank a few days into his travels after striking an iceberg late one evening. You may not have heard of John Harper but I'm sure many of you are familiar with the tragic tale of the Titanic.



Upon impact with the iceberg, the Titanic began to flood. As the ship was sinking, John placed his sister and daughter in a lifeboat and went around sharing the Gospel amidst the chaos with anyone who was willing to listen. Even as he was dealing with hypothermia in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean, John continued to evangelize to anyone he could. John Harper would eventually succumb to hypothermia and his body would be lost in the depths of the sea. Though his body may have perished, the impact that he has made on those who were willing to listen are eternal.

John Harper was seen evangelizing during the last moments of his life; but what is evangelism? Evangelism, according to Google, is the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness. It comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (pronounced euangelion) meaning good news; the redemption of humanity by the saving grace of God through the death and resurrection of Christ. Now that we know *what* evangelism is, let's talk about *why* evangelism is so important and why John Harper would forego his own safety and well-being in order to evangelize to those aboard a sinking ship.

Firstly, the sharing of the Gospel was commanded by Christ himself. In Matthew 28, after his resurrection, Jesus tells the disciples to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (verses 19-20). This command, also known as the “Great Commission”, is the last command Jesus gave to us before ascending to heaven. Because this was Jesus’ last command, the great commission carries significantly more weight much like the final words of a passing loved one does. In addition to this, Jesus’ identity gives this command power and authority. The great

commission wasn't an instruction from just any religious leader or figure; it was given to us by Jesus Christ, our Lord, Savior, and King. The King of the universe commands us to evangelize.

Secondly, the Gospel is the most important thing anyone will ever hear. Imagine, if you will, a disease that has plagued the entire world. Every man, woman, and child will die in the most horrendous manner imaginable. Though many have tried, all have failed to find a cure for this disease. Now let's say you stumble upon a miracle cure and that causes your disease to disappear completely. You find that this cure will completely and immediately heal any person without any side effects. Wouldn't you want to share this cure with others, especially to those you love and care for? Though this disease is a work of fiction, sin is not. When you understand the consequences of sin, which is eternal condemnation, the Gospel becomes the most important thing anyone will ever hear. All of our earthly treasures and worries are just that, earthly. They are temporary in nature and will fade when our physical bodies pass whereas the fate of our souls is eternal.

Lastly, evangelism should be a natural progression of someone who is saved. I'm not saying that you need to evangelize the second you are saved, but it should happen eventually, sooner rather than later. The abounding joy and secure hope that we have as a result of being saved causes us to want to share that joy with others. For most, evangelism will not come easily. It takes courage, training, and accountability; nevertheless, it is a natural progression. Furthermore, as we continue to build up our relationship with Christ, we become more like Him. We take on His likeness and His traits. Evidence of our transformation can be seen by the way we conduct ourselves and through our actions. One of those actions is showing love and compassion, namely sharing the eternal hope that we have to those who do not know Christ. Let us remember the eternal joy we have through Christ and the call to be like our Lord.

Though I did not know John Harper personally, I'm sure that he understood these things. He knew that many were going to lose their lives, not having known Christ. He did all he could in the final hours of his life so that though many would perish, they would at least have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel and respond. As followers of Christ, we are called to spread the Gospel in any way that we can. So, I encourage all of you to do anything you can to share the good news that we have been so privileged to have been exposed to. I know that life gets busy and we become so caught up in our daily routines that we become distracted. So there are times when the urgency of the sharing the Gospel message becomes lost and our priorities become skewed. Yet, we have to turn your eyes back to what is important. So let us evangelize in all occasions and places - around our neighborhood, through homeless ministries, through participating in a mission trip, to our friends and families. At our schools and work, let us strive for excellence and demonstrating integrity as ambassadors for Christ, but so through that when the Gospel is shared, it can be received with credibility.

Let us do our best to share the good news so that others can experience the incredible, genuine, never-ceasing joy that we have in and through Christ.

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