



**Unswervingly Committed to
The Proclamation of the Gospel
With Accuracy, Boldness, & Love
Trusting God to Save His People**

Personal Philosophy of Open Air Preaching

Geoffrey R. Kirkland
Christ Fellowship Bible Church

I am a minister of the gospel. By His grace, God has called me to be a herald of the unspeakable riches of Christ. My ambition in life is to please God by magnifying His Son and proclaiming His gospel to the local congregation that He has called me to pastor and by pleading with sinners to repent of sin and turn to God in Christ by faith alone. I am not a full time evangelist. My calling in life is not to travel and be an itinerant preacher from city to city and from town to town. God has wisely and wondrously chosen me to serve His people of Christ Fellowship Bible Church in St Louis, Missouri. My foremost mission that God has entrusted to me consists in the faithful prayer and study of Scripture so that I can faithfully preach and teach His Word weekly. One of the duties of pastoral ministry that I firmly embrace is the evangelization of the lost. This can happen many ways and there are innumerable occasions for believers to proclaim Christ and His gospel to the lost, and one of the ways that I evangelize is by open air preaching, or, as some have titled it: "street preaching." *In what follows, I delineate my personal philosophy of open air preaching and then break it down and define and clarify it phrase by phrase.*

Philosophy Simply Stated:

I'm unswervingly committed to the proclamation of the gospel, with accuracy, boldness, & love, while trusting God to save His people.

I. Preeminent Commitment

When I go to the streets each week in St Louis, I remember that I am first and foremost a minister of the gospel. I'm a Christian. I am a man called by God, consumed with God, on mission to proclaim my Savior and to simply declare, as a herald would, the message of the

King. The Sovereign One has sent me to go and make disciples of all nations. As a pastor of a local congregation, I cannot -- and I will not -- neglect the flock that God has entrusted to my care for the wonderful opportunity of open air preaching. I would be forfeiting my foremost and primary calling if I were to do so. But one of the ways that I *can* serve the flock of God is by leading in evangelism, taking folks to the streets with me, teaching and training others to evangelize, hand out tracts, articulate the gospel, start gospel conversations, and open air preach. My preeminent commitment is to Christ and His gospel and *not* to open air preaching. I cannot be infatuated with the ministry but forget to worship my Master. So I make it my preeminent commitment to go to the streets as a man of God, with the gospel of God, full of the joy of God, and eager to see God work through His Word, for the saving of lost souls and the edifying of converted souls.

2. Proclaim Christ!

I don't go to the streets just to help people with physical needs. Though I often do have bags and prepackaged gifts of food, toiletries, blankets, etc. for those in need that I may come across, but I always will serve physical needs but emphasize the spiritual need they have -- to turn to Christ in repentance and faith to be delivered from the wrath to come! So when I go out, the engine that drives what I do is the proclamation of the gospel. Whether it's a one-to-one conversation, or tract distribution, or open air preaching, or high school ministry, or college campus evangelism, I always must ensure that I'm *proclaiming Christ*. Paul said it so well to the Corinthians: we preach Christ crucified (1 Cor 1.23). This must drive me, compel me, enflame me, impel me, and launch me into the great sea of dark and sinful hearts that swarms me every day in St Louis. Whatever I'm doing, and especially in open air preaching, my duty never rests in arguments, explaining or defending or proving the existence of God, or trying to make someone just go to church. What's more, I must never mock or ridicule the lost because they are, in fact, -- *lost!* I go to proclaim Christ! I stand to speak of my Savior! I lift up my voice and herald the only way to heaven through Christ Jesus and His righteousness! I unashamedly uphold the authority of Scripture, the glory of God, the worth and person and substitutionary atonement of Christ, His bodily, physical resurrection, and His soon-coming for judgment. Like any man who *preaches*, preaching is not dialogue, it is *declaring God's truth*. So I don't dialogue *while* I preach -- I declare the gospel of Christ when I preach. This often opens up the door for many wonderful dialogues with people after I'm finished preaching. I am a proclaimer of Christ -- and Him alone!

3. Loving Urgency!

Often I go through this scenario in my mind. What if God were to snatch me from this realm and drop me into the fires of hell for five minutes. While there, I could hear the screams of the damned, I could smell the fires eating away at flesh that cannot be consumed, I could see the endless multitudes of sinners who forever, everlastingly, and painfully will endure the undiminished torments of God's just and righteous and angry wrath for endless eternities to come. Then God snatches me out of hell and brings me back to this earth. What would I then do? And how would I then live? For one thing: I would be urgent, focused, desperate in prayer, and loving in desperate warnings toward the lost! I'm convicted oftentimes when I don't share the gospel because it just may be that in that moment I'm not believing in eternal hellfire. If I did, I wouldn't fear man or care what they thought of me. I'd proclaim Christ and call sinners to repent and believe the gospel *now* for the salvation of their souls! So when I hit the streets, I

must “speak the truth in love.” I must always speak in a manner that is full of love, grace, compassion, and mercy. I never want to be the stumbling block to someone. I never want to be the one to offend someone. May it always and only be the *gospel message* that offends, not the open air preacher that offends. And at the same time, I am a man in love with the truth. So I preach truth. I can have love all day long but I must speak the truth to men whether they want it, accept it, embrace it, or agree with it. My job is not to make people believe. My job is to preach truth. As Paul said: “I believed, therefore, I spoke.” And if I really believed that danger -- eternal danger -- was imminent, I would be far more loving in warning sinners of hellfire! Nothing is unloving of warning sinners of God’s angry wrath to come! Christ Himself, the man full of grace and truth, warned sinners relentlessly of the fires of hell and of judgment day! O how I must learn from my Savior and emulate Him more! So when I go to the streets and preach, I go with loving urgency in declaring who God is, explaining the dire and helpless condition of all men, and the accomplished work that Christ accomplished at Calvary as the propitiation and one-time sacrifice for His people. And I go presenting truth and pleading with sinners to come to Christ -- *now, today, at once, without procrastinating!* As Paul pleaded with and sought to persuade those in Rome to come to Christ, so I must go and plead with sinners and persuade them to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ. For now is the acceptable time! Today is the day of salvation! Eternity is soon coming! Delay no longer!

4. Total Trust in God's Sovereignty

The confidence in all evangelism rests upon the unshakeable and unfathomable sovereignty of God. God not only ordains the ultimate end in the salvation of sinners, but He also ordains the means to save His people and that is through the prayers and faithful evangelism of His people. God’s absolute sovereignty does not diminish my responsibility to go and preach; rather, it fortifies confidence while doing it! God’s election and predestination and hardening of sinners is not an excuse for me to not go out and win souls; rather, it fuels my encouragement and confidence in knowing that God is working *through* His Word, for His glory, according to His plan, at just the right moment. I go and preach and I pray and trust. I preach my heart out and seek to persuade sinners to leave all and come to Christ at once. And yet I depend wholly on the Spirit of God to give light to darkened hearts and to give life to spiritually dead souls. I pray and then I preach. I trust and then I travail for souls. I depend on God and I also declare my God! When I don’t see visible results that I ask for in prayer, I don’t stop being faithful when it seems that I’m not being fruitful. God tells me that it’s required of stewards that one be found *trustworthy*. I long to hear one day: well done, good and *faithful* servant. I know that just as Paul preached and the Spirit of God used that Word to bring God’s people to salvation, so I must preach the gospel and trust the Spirit of God to awaken sinners to life that God has appointed. So I go. So I preach. So I’m confident. So I trust. So I am desperate in prayer. And I preach with all my heart.

There are, of course, other benefits that come from faithful evangelism (and, specifically to the matter at hand, open air preaching). First, my own soul receives encouragement and grows in Godly courage as I speak the gospel in the public and before the masses of people that walk by. Second, I trust that true believers often walk by and may find encouragement in their own souls as they hear the person and crosswork of Christ being extolled and presented before sinners.

Third, street ministry provides opportunities for me to bring other saints out with me for on-site, boots-on-the-ground discipleship, so that we can grow together in our going out to sinners and compelling them to come to the heavenly wedding feast! Fourth, going out to the lost regularly increases the burden for the lost in my own soul. It exacerbates the intolerable burden that countless millions are on the broad path headed for everlasting torment in the fires of hell. This leads me to prayer, to desperation, to Christ-centered preaching, and to more evangelism. And fifth, this evangelistic ministry magnifies Christ in the public square and brings Christ to countless souls that may never step foot in a solidly biblical and faithful local church. Rather than waiting for sinners to come to us, we must go to them! To God be the glory.