

The One Degree Rule: Raising Your Evangelistic Temperature

Outreach 101, Part 5 | Resurrection University | 05/10/23

- I. [Spiritual Conversations Update]

- II. [Introduction] Without a doubt, the steam engine was one of the most significant inventions of the 18th century. Without it, we wouldn't have conceptualized mass transit over large distances, moving supplies across the developing world, or even self-propelled vehicles on the road. In many ways, it fueled the industrial revolution and conceptually paved the way for the future developments of motors and engines. But what is it that made these engines so powerful? How did they move? What was the difference between these engines moving and not moving? In simple terms, the steam engine is pretty self-descriptive. It was an engine that operated using steam. The system would run by the use of coal which was ignited in a compartment that would direct heat toward the water tank surrounding the coal. The water would then heat up to the point of boiling – or 212 degrees Fahrenheit. When water boils, steam is produced, and the steam in the engine would gather in the highest point – called the steam dome – and then it would be pushed into the piston valve where its pressure and expansion would cause the steam to move the piston. Much like in our cars today, the motion of the piston is what drives the gears and compels the vehicle to move. So, looking at the entirety of the engine, we can trace the most significant element of the process of the steam engine to a single word – *temperature*. From the inception of the idea way back in the first century A.D. from Greek inventor Hero of Alexandria, who created a spinning sphere from steam power to the last steam locomotive decommissioned in the mid 20th century, every iteration depended on one thing – the right temperature. The water needed to be heated up to 212 degrees, and any less meant the difference of moving hundreds of thousands of pounds.
 - a. Welcome family to Resurrection University. We have been discussing the topic of outreach for the past few weeks, ranging from a discussion on gifts, to tracing outreach trends up to and including our cultural moment, to looking at the story of Jonah and trying to determine what it is that – like Jonah – inhibits us from progressing forward and scattering the seed we have been called to scatter. Again, the idea of this series is to provide not just a single approach to the topic of evangelism, but a diverse plurality of approaches, sourced in different points of God's Word and different authors. So far, we've explored the ideas of Robert

E. Webber, Randy Newman, Rich Richardson, Dallas Willard and John Stott – to name a few. Through the lense of these authors, and through passages like the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus’ questioning of the rich man in Luke 18, and the contempt of Jonah in the four chapters of the book of Jonah – we have been approaching the topic of outreach from several different angles. Part of the motivation in this series has been to 1) establish the consistent demand of Scripture that we would be those who seek to expand the kingdom by means of outreach, and 2) create a comprehensive look at the idea of evangelism so that we would have a better understanding of what it means to evangelize and that we would perhaps dismantle the walls that inhibit us from fulfilling the commission we have been given by Jesus himself. Today, we approach again from a different angle, and it continues in the vein of practicality that we’ve established over the past few weeks. Two weeks ago, we introduced the idea and power of questions in our evangelistic dialogue – the often forgotten third step of evangelism. Last, week, we took on the idea of obstacles that perhaps inhibit us, using Jonah as a tool to address the areas that inhibit our evangelistic effort. Tonight, we are going to introduce an idea by author Kevin G. Harney known as the “One Degree Rule.” The goal is that by means of this rule, we can perhaps develop a method through which we can challenge ourselves to become better at our outreach with each passing day. In other words, **today we will develop a means of *evaluation* for the sake of *integration* into our Gospel proclamation.**

- i. Much like our illustration, today we are going to look at what it means to raise what Harney calls our “evangelistic temperature.” And ultimately, what I want to be sure we understand is that we must not take for granted the reality that a one-degree difference makes. As we engage in this process, we may be discouraged about where we are in terms of our evangelistic temperature, but the illustration of the steam engine serves to prove a point – you must not underestimate the difference of a one-degree increase – from 211-212 degrees, you move from hot water to locomotion capable of moving hundreds of thousands of pounds. So too, as we strive to increase our evangelistic temperature, the process may seem gradual, but the effects could prove to change the lives of those with whom we share the gospel. As we learned last week, we are tasked with the responsibility of scattering seed. So the question is, *how has your scattering been?* We know that God brings the

growth, but we have been tasked with bringing the seed – a role that we must take seriously. In the spirit of participating well, we must embrace evaluation. **We must be willing to continuously take our evangelistic temperature so we can strive to be the best we can be with the commission entrusted to us.**

1. We won't be outside of Scriptural precedent today because we will be pulling from a passage from the book of Matthew – this, once again, will just be another angle from which to approach the idea of evangelism. Today, we will be looking at the words of Jesus in Matthew 9, specifically verse 35 through 38. Before we read it, let's locate where we are in Matthew's Gospel. Prior to verse 35, we have experienced fully the sermon on the mount – chapters 5 through 7 – and Jesus' work in exhibiting his dominance over the natural and spiritual world – chapters 8 and 9. Tim Mackie summarizes these two chapters as “Jesus bringing the kingdom into people's lives.” In chapters 8 and 9, we see Jesus heals the Leper, the Centurion's Servant, and Peter's sick mother-in-law; he calms the stormy seas, exorcizes the demon-possessed men, heals the paralyzed man, he heals the women with the issue of blood, he brings a girl back to life, heals two blind men, and then cast out the demon of the mute man, allowing him to speak again. All of these events are then bookended by our passage today – which some call the end of Matthew's first discourse and the introduction into his second discourse, starting in chapter 10. Let's go ahead and read our passage – Matthew 9:35-38.

a. ^{ESV} “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

(Matt. 9:35 ESV)

- III. [Matthew 9:35] We see in verse 35 a summarization of chapters 8-9 and a very clear indication of the works of Jesus we didn't get to read about. Matthew is echoing the words of John 21:25 which remind us that "...there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." It is unclear how many lives Jesus impacted by means of his healing and exorcism. Scripture provides us a portion of his ministry – a fully sufficient portion, mind you – but we are still left with the mysterious and wonderful reality that the fullness of Jesus' ministry cannot fully be described. The innumerable healings, proclamations, and teachings help us understand that Jesus' ministry was full and comprehensive. However, although we don't see the fullness of Jesus' ministry recorded, Matthew allows us to see the heart of Jesus in the midst of his work – which, in my opinion, is far more important for us to know. Here is why: **In becoming more like Jesus, we seek not to emulate his miracles but his heart.** In other words, Matthew is saying "All this and more Jesus did throughout the land of Israel, but now let me show you some of the heart of Jesus; some of his internal dialogue."
- a. I believe that this internal dialogue of Jesus and his subsequent command for us in verses 36-38 provide an exceptional pattern for us to follow in our evangelism – both in terms of the heart we should have toward the lost and our response, which is to pray that God would increase within us a burdened heart for the world.
- IV. [Matthew 9:36] [ILL] – In Sydney, Australia, there is a rocky cliff known as "The Gap." It is described as the most notorious suicide destination in the entire country. With its reputation, one would think that no one would want to live near such a place, but Don and Moya Ritche, who lived within eyeshot of The Gap, have refused to leave after nearly 50 years living on the cliffside. When the Ritches were asked why they remain, Don explained with a story. Every morning, he wakes up to check the precipice. If he senses that someone is too close and is perhaps contemplating suicide, he invites them over for tea. "I get to offer them an alternative" Don said. Eventually, Don started to view his role as a calling. In his 50 years, Don managed to talk down an estimated 160 people – people who took the alternative. When Don and Moya were asked if it ever bothered them living so close to such a tragic place, Moya responded "but isn't it wonderful that we live here? So we can help people?"

- a. Don and Moya chose to live in proximity to those who were harassed and hurting; those who had succumbed to the lies of the enemy, who told them that they deserved to die. I think this is an excellent picture – although, inadequate – of the heart of Jesus in verse 36, which says “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” The kind of compassion exhibited by Don and Moya – the kind that looks upon the hurt, crushed and broken and responds by saying “no, I am not going anywhere. In fact, I am going to venture forward into that brokenness with a message of hope” – that is the kind of compassion we are talking about here.
- i. The Greek work for compassion here is actually the most intense Greek word that serves to express an empathetic emotional response, and it is only ever used by Jesus. Commentator William Barclay identifies that the root of the word comes from the Greek term “bowels.” In short, Barclay writes, “...it describes the compassion which moves people to the deepest depths of their being.” More than that, the word exhibits the kind of response that is so powerful, it demands that something be done as a result. R.T. France writes that this word “...regularly issues an action to meet the need which evokes it.” Even looking at the etymology of the word gives us an image of this idea. It comes from the late Latin term *compati* which is a blending of two words – *com*, which means “with or together” and *pati* “to suffer.” The second half of the word “compassion” is passion, which is often used to describe Christ’s work on the Cross – the passion of the Christ. This emphasizes the root of the word, which means “to suffer.”
1. So, we are left with a word that reveals to us the heart of Jesus; the deep resounding cry of his gut, and the word used to describe this is “compassion” – to suffer with. The first time I truly studied this word was back when I was in youth group and my mentor dwelt out the depths of Jesus’ compassion. He said something that I remember to this day – that Jesus’ compassion is central in his incarnation. This is what I mean – to “suffer with” someone you must first be “with” them, and Jesus’ incarnation is most fully expressed in the title Immanuel – “God with us.”

- a. Let me get to my point. Like Don and Moya, who dwelt with the hurting and broken people – people prepared to take their own lives – Jesus teaching, healing, and gospel proclamation were all motivated by a similar idea – dwelling in and amongst the ailing Israel who were helpless and wounded; sheep without a shepherd; people dying in their ignorance, twisted ideologies, and helplessness. In fact, the expression “harassed and helpless” according to Barclay, “describe[s] a corpse which is flayed and mangled; someone who is robbed through extortion, or pestered by those without pity, are treated with wanton insolence; someone who is utterly wearied by a journey which seems to know no end.” Is this not an accurate description of the world around us?
- i. Compassion reveals the heart of Jesus. I think this is an excellent summation of the kind of heart we’ve been trying to instill within each of us throughout this series. The kind of evangelism that strives to be locals in the lives of those around us; the kind that takes the time to invest in the lives of those who are lost; the kind that takes the great commission seriously. In short, we need to have hearts like that of Jesus. Hearts that look at the harassed and helpless people in our world and mourns their fractured and broken estate. Hearts that are so compelled by the good news and how it has so thoroughly saved us from “The Gap” of our souls that we cannot help but look upon a longing world and deliver to them news that – like our friend Don Ritche – offers people an alternative option.
1. This is my point, and I think it is a meaningful contribution to our discussion on evangelism: **Compassion is the core of Christlike proclamation.** Let me qualify this point just a bit more as we finish up our observations of this passage.

- V. [Matthew 9:37-38] Christ didn't simply mourn as he looked out onto the crowds with compassion. He didn't dwell in his emotions, overwhelmed and unsure of how to proceed. He responded. Remember what R.T. France said? That the compassion exhibited by Jesus here "...regularly issues an action to meet the need which evokes it." Jesus, following suit, issues the action to his disciples at the end of chapter 9 and into chapter 10. Verse 37 and 38 say this: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"
- a. Immediately after these verses, Matthew identifies the twelve apostles and then sends them out into the land and communities of Israel. But this passage is most certainly endowed with both a descriptive and prescriptive lense. The descriptive lense places Jesus' words in the context of his conversation with his disciples, whom he was going to send out to evangelize. However, these words were not designed only for Jesus' 12 apostles. They were designed for us today. In other words, they are also prescriptive for us. "There is one word I want us to focus on in these final two verses – "pray." This is the only imperative in our passage today, and it is a very specific kind of word. In the Greek language, this verb is known as an ingressive aorist. "Wait, Jake, when did we start talking about aggressive therapists?" No, that's not what I said. I said ingressive aorist, and all those two words mean is that this word works in such a way that Jesus wanted to introduce an action that he never intended anyone to stop. In other words, it emphasizes the initial action that acts as an entrance into a state or condition. It is as though Jesus is saying "so long as there exists a harvest to be reaped, be in prayer that the Lord would send laborers into it." What this means is that, according to Michael J. Wilkins of the Talbot School of Theology, this is "...a prayer that is as urgent today as it was when Jesus' original disciples heard his words." But we must ask, what is it that we are praying for? The Jewish reader and listener for whom this gospel was directed may have heard the words "therefore pray earnestly" expecting Jesus' next words to be "for the harvest." But these weren't his next words, were they? Whom does he want us to pray for? The Laborers. This actually frames the problem well. The pharisees of Jesus' time – the one's who left God's people without a shepherd – saw the harvest as chaff to be destroyed and burned up and they longed for the destruction of all sinners. Like Jonah – who was the topic of last week's lesson – the pharisees had contempt for the masses. But Jesus had a different way of

seeing the crowds. A way that reflected the true nature of the heart of God – In the words of Barclay, “Jesus saw them as a harvest to be reaped and to be saved... Jesus, in love, died for the salvation of sinners.”

- i. The question we are left with in this passage is whom are we going to strive to be more like? The Pharisees or like Jesus? Do we bear the contemptible heart of Jonah or the compassionate heart of God? Do we pray that the Lord would vanquish the harvest, or save it? Tying the entirety of our passage together, it is from this compassion that Jesus encourages us to pray. But what we anticipate is that he would encourage us to pray for those upon whom we’ve experienced compassion, but what he commands instead (δεήθητε – to beseech; pray) is that we would pray for the laborers – us, those whom he sends out. In other words, **Compassion should evoke in us not just impotent sympathy but compelled empathy.** We mustn’t become immobilized by the size of the harvest, but by means of compassion – the kind of compassion Jesus shows time and time again – we must turn the focus inward, allowing the compassion to spur within us a desire to go and tell. We must pray for ourselves, asking “Lord, send out laborers into your harvest, and may I be effectually counted among them.” But be prepared, family. When we start praying this way – praying that we would be sent out as laborers into the harvest – we must be prepared for the answer, because he will answer.

1. In the spirit of this prayer and for a practical way in which we can appropriately act on this compassion, let’s turn now to Kevin Harney’s method – a tool for self-evaluation he calls the “One Degree Rule”

VI. [Prayer for Laborers] Pulling from this idea of compassion fueled prayer for laborers, Harney writes “Very often, the problem in the evangelistic equation is not with the world and those who are spiritually disconnected. The problem is with those who are already in God’s family. Jesus wants us to see that the harvest is plentiful (many people are hungry for God). It is the workers who are not reaping the harvest. Our hearts have become cold. We don’t share, care, and pray as we should. In response, Jesus invites us to pray... for ourselves.”

- a. So will we enter into this imperative to pray that we might become laborers in this harvest? Will we pray “Lord, increase my burden for the

lost, break my heart for those who do not know you, and help me strive each and every day to increase the scope and frequency of my outreach.” It is a bold prayer, but one necessary for those who want to take seriously the great commission.

- VII. [The One Degree Rule] “Alright, we get it Jake. I want to take this idea seriously, but how do I increase my desire, scope and frequency of my outreach?” That is a great question, and I think the way I want to propose to you today is the called One Degree Rule. This rule is quite simple. On a scale from 1 to 10 – 1 being cold, apathetic, and filled with contempt and 10 being white hot, active and routine – what would you consider to be your evangelistic temperature? For a little more description on the scale, just so we can strive to be accurate, a one represents a heart that is cold and apathetic with outreach. Harney proceeds to describe what a one is like: “We don’t pray for lost people, we’ve become too busy to make space for people who are outside of God’s family, we walk past opportunities to let the light of Jesus shine and we hardly notice it, we rarely tell others about our faith and are apprehensive about communicating the gospel of Jesus.” It is sobering to consider ourselves in this light, but perhaps it is the dose of honesty we need to spur ourselves toward compassion and embodying the heart of Jesus. Now, Harney also describes what a 10 is like: “...a heart and life that are sizzling hot for reaching out to those who are lost. We pray often, we notice people who are disconnected, we make time in our schedules to be with those who are far from God (and we enjoy it), our lights are shining, we speak of our faith to unbelievers, we share stories of what God is doing in our lives, and we share the gospel in natural ways.” This is a person who identifies with the compassion of Jesus when he looks to the crowds. This is a person who prays the prayer of the laborers.
- a. [ILL.] My incredible and lovely wife takes part in an eating lifestyle known as Bright Line Eating, and before you begin the processes recommended by BLE, you need to take a susceptibility test. It measures you on a scale of 1 to 10 how susceptible you are to food addiction. Now, this test requires one thing from you – that you would be brutally honest about yourself at your worst. The philosophy behind the test is that you cannot be helped unless you first admit you need it.
 - i. In a similar way, we must be honest about our temperature. We have to genuinely ask, what do I think about outreach and what are my feelings toward it?

VIII. [What is your temperature? (Exercise)] So this is what I want us to do for the next 10 minutes or so. Go ahead and take some time to consider where you might be on this scale, from 1 to 10. After you have circled your number, feel free to discuss your results with your group. Please understand that the point of this exercise and for all self-examination is not to become discouraged at your low temperature or prideful at your high temperature. In the words of Harney, “The goal of using the one degree rule is to honestly assess where you are and then ask the next question: ‘How can I raise my evangelistic temperature by one degree *today*?’” Lets go ahead and spend some time on this and then we will reconvene.

IX. [How To Raise Your Evangelistic Temperature] Excellent. **We all have a number, and no matter where you are at, we should always be striving for the one-degree difference.** However, the question becomes “how do I increase my evangelistic temperature?” “How do I increase my compassion and boldly pray the prayer that emulates the willingness of Isaiah when he declares ‘here I am Lord, send me!’?” There are five methods recommended by Harney that we should consider in our efforts to move up a degree. Remember, our goal should only ever be just one additional degree. If you are a 4 and you are aiming to get to 10 as fast as possible, you will find yourself getting disappointed quickly. This is why this is known as the “One Degree Rule” – our goal is only to ever reach the next degree.

- a. The first method is the imperative of our passage today: **to engage in prayer regularly.**
 - i. One of our priorities this year as a church is prayer, and in light of that priority we introduced a weekly prayer pattern. We have in that prayer pattern a plethora of opportunities to ask for the lord to guide us, embolden us, and to create in us compassionate hearts in the likeness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. On Mondays, we pray for our ministry, and for many of you, what that includes is both embodying and administering the gospel in and amongst the lives of those around you. Your prayer for your ministry should be **“Lord, send me as a laborer into your harvest.”** On Thursday, you have the opportunity to pray for three people by name. One week, I encourage you to be intentional about making those three people each a person who has yet to come to know Christ as their savior, and then pray the bold prayer “Lord, send me as a laborer

into your harvest.” On Friday, we are encouraged to pray for our families. I know for sure there are those in my family who are not Christians, and so my prayer for them is often “Lord, send me as a laborer into your harvest.” On Sunday, we pray for the supernatural, and what more supernatural prayer is there that the Lord would bring people into saving faith. And what is Jesus’ prescribed way he wants us to pray for those who have yet to be saved? “Lord, send me as a laborer into your harvest.”

1. Prayer is essential to our outreach. We cannot fall out of the habit. So let's take the already existing momentum that we've established as a church and allow it to fuel our outreach.
 - a. Bruce B. Barton writes “Mission finds its motive in the heart of Jesus and its strength in the prayers of the church.”
- b. The second method we can consider is that we would **make time to be with those who are far from God.**
 - i. This has been central to our teaching thus far in our series. The expression I continually come back to is that we would become locals in the lives of those around us. But I think Harney expands on this idea a bit in a way that I think is helpful for our discussion on outreach.
 1. Harney writes, “Have you ever studied the gospels just to take note of how often Jesus was interrupted? Over and over again, whether Jesus was traveling, resting, or teaching, he was surrounded by the pressing needs of other people.... Jesus never seemed bothered and never treated people like interruptions. Instead, he made space for them.” Harney proceeds to quote several passages from Luke 5, 7, 17, 18, and from Matthew 15.
 - a. The question we must ask ourselves is how do we see the people in our lives around us? Do we see them as costly interruptions or as divine intercessions? Are our lives ordered in such a way that we can rightfully act when we are interrupted?
 - i. Author Marilyn Hontz writes “Invite God to interrupt you. If your heavenly Father wanted to, could he interrupt you at any time during your day to ask you to do something with him?”

1. We've become pretty bad at interruptions, haven't we. I know I've struggled with this. If I am only moderately inconvenienced with an interruption, sometimes I get frustrated. Marilyn's quote above actually reminded me of a comedy bit from a comedian named Sebastian Maniscalco.
[SHOW VIDEO]

a. I thought that was funny. But he has a point. We have an aversion to interruptions. And I think we need to be better about being interrupted; about living an unhurried life and prioritizing what is important. One way we can increase our evangelistic temperature is to be content in allowing the opportunities God's sends your way to be a holy intrusion.

c. A third way to increase our outreach temperature would be to **tell stories.**

i. These kind of stories are the ones I have been asking you to share as we start each lesson every other week. I've been asking you, "Hey, tell me how has it been going?" As we walk together as a community and **as we strive to make evangelism part of our church life, we need to practice the act of sharing how our outreach is progressing.** Whether bad or good, a system of accountability always spurs you toward your goal.

1. [ILL] – Part of the Bright Line Eating lifestyle that my wife partakes in includes a weekly meeting with her BLE Buddies. These groups function to keep everyone accountable to each other as they learn to eat in a sustainable and fulfilling way. This is the kind of practice I am recommending for evangelism. Let's share how we are doing, the challenges we are facing, and the opportunities for which we need prayer. Small groups could be a great place for this.

d. A fourth way to increase our temperature would be **to make celebration a natural part of our evangelistic process.**

i. When we intentionally celebrate that someone allowed you to share the gospel with them for the first time, you mustn't miss the

opportunity to rejoice in that progress. From small victories to full conversions, it doesn't matter – we should rejoice with one another that we are partaking in the role of seed scattering entrusted to us. In other words, let's rejoice in the one degree increases.

- e. Lastly, we need to **spend time reflecting on the reality of eternity**. What I mean by this is that we need to understand the eternal wonder that awaits us and the eternal consequences that await those who do not know Jesus. We must allow this to spur us toward outreach temperature increase.
 - i. C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Weight of Glory* writes, “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit.”
 - 1. We have to recognize the scope of our work here; the work with which we have been entrusted. William Barclay writes, “That harvest will never be reaped unless there are reapers to reap it.” We have been given an enormous task with enormous consequences. We need to be sure we regularly reflect on the incredible work we get to do.

X. [Conclusion] A steam locomotive moves down the tracks because of a one-degree difference. From hot water to powerful propulsion is the image I want us to maintain as we strive every day to increase by one degree. The entirety of the Christian faith is truly one able to be measured in degrees. This image places us into a thought space of perpetual growth, continual dependence on the one who brings it, and constant humility. Today, we looked at Matthew 9:35-38 and saw not only the heart of Jesus but how the heart of Jesus was spurred to respond – that we would pray for ourselves, the laborers, so that we would commit to our work in the harvest. With that idea in mind, we then looked at Kevin Harney's One Degree Rule as a practical tool to help us conform our hearts to that of Christ's, that we would be spurred by compassion to pray bravely that we would be sent out into the harvest. With each degree, we are achieving the goal. We proceed focusing not on the destination but the journey.

PRAY