

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

Formal Critique: Sharing Jesus without Fear

A Paper
Submitted to Professor Aaron Marks
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Course
Personal Evangelism
EVAN 565

By
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Bibliographical Entry

Fay, William and Linda Evans Shepherd. *Sharing Jesus without Fear*. Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1999.

Author Information

William 'Bill' Fay is a nationally renowned evangelist who has written many books on contemporary evangelism used by countless church leaders and even lay ministers for a unique approach to witnessing. Yet, prior to 1981, Bill Fay was hardly what you would expect in an evangelist. He was the executive of an international mega-corporation, had ties with the Mafia, and owned one of the largest prostitution houses in the US. When his prostitution house was raided, he faced imprisonment for 6-8 years but had found the grace of God in a small church in Colorado and he gave his life to Christ. God completely reversed his fate and he was able to leave court as a free man and has been serving God with every ounce of his being and now even has a seminary degree and serves as a pastor and chaplain. With his unique background, Fay has crafted a series of highly successful no-nonsense guides to reaching people with the Holy Spirit.

Content Summary

Using a four-step approach, the author provides a comprehensive guide for sharing the Christian faith with the world of non-believers in such a way that believers will find to be simple and non-confrontational. Initially, Bill Fay guides readers through proof that the Holy Spirit can use anyone who is willing to share their faith regardless of how much they know about the Christian doctrines but warns that the Holy Spirit cannot use what he calls the 'Sin of Silence' (Fay and Shepherd 1999, 7-9) or simply, not sharing their faith at all.

From here, Fay guides the reader through the first step in the process which entails a series of questions that help the reader gauge the current spiritual state of the one they are trying to reach,

these questions are known as the ‘Share Jesus Questions’ (Fay and Shepherd 1999, 30) and serve to determine what, if anything the Holy Spirit is doing in this person’s life. Fay offers a variety of examples of events he experienced when using the questions and their final result. Most of all, he reminds the reader to listen and not try to ‘fix’ anything and encourages letting the Holy Spirit do His job.

The next step in Bill Fay’s method encompasses the main focus of the technique which is a series of verses that accurately cover the Gospel of Jesus Christ and draws the person being witnessed to deeper and deeper into a discovery of God’s love. Fay makes sure to point out that it is critical that the evangelist have the person being witnessed to read the verses out loud as this helps them internalize the verses and then requesting the reader of the scriptures to express what they feel the verses are telling them.. He covers the reality of sin in Romans 3:23 and 6:23, followed by the sacrifice of Jesus as salvation in John 3:3 and 14:6, then he discusses calling upon Jesus’ name and believing in his sacrifice using Romans 10:9-11 and his resurrection’s truth in 2 Corinthians 5:15 before closing with Revelation 3:20 to ask if the person is ready to accept Jesus. Fay also explains that if the evangelist feels the person missed any critical information that they should be instructed to ‘Read it again!’ (Fay and Shepherd 1999, 51).

Not skipping a beat, Fay moves through his method with the crucial step of urging the person being witnessed to towards a decision to accept Christ. In a similar style as his first step, the author offers a list of ‘Commitment Questions’ (Fay and Shepherd 1999, 61) that encompass all of the things they must believe to accept Christ and points each question to one of Scriptures they have just read. In these questions he asks the critical questions about sin and forgiveness on the cross then discusses the cross and surrendering the person’s life to Christ before asking the person if they are ready to invite Jesus into their life. The author reminds the reader of the book

that it is paramount to focus on letting the Holy Spirit take over in this instance for that is the only way the person can be truly saved. In preparation for accepting Christ, the author also takes a moment to guide the reader through the ‘Sinner’s Prayer’ but only as an optional step. Again, Fay sprinkles stories of the experiences he has witnessed and helps the readers get a feel for what they might expect at this point.

Completing the final stage in his method, Fay now discusses the final step – what to do if the person accepts Christ and how to help them get ‘plugged in’ to their new faith. The author uses a slightly different style than the previous question sections as many of the questions are designed as a cross check... making sure that the new believer fully understands what they have asked to happen. First the new believer is encouraged to discuss Christ as payment for their sins followed by a brief introduction to prayer, then Fay encourages finding out who the new believer thinks has been praying for them to accept Christ and even suggests calling that person, these steps lead into helping this person find a church to be worshipping, preferably with a face they know or inviting them to the evangelist’s church. The reader is highly encouraged to walk with the new believer in any way possible so that they are firmly connected to a church they can grow with.

Furthermore, Fay also takes a chapter to prepare the reader to address many common objections to accepting Christ in hopes of turning a ‘no’ into a ‘yes.’ In order to do this, the reader is encouraged to simply ask ‘why’ and is then provided with a list of thirty-six common objections ranging from the common (i.e. – My friends/family will think I am crazy or I am not sure if I believe this) to the more obscure (i.e. – I am God or Cults are the Answer). With each of these objections, Fay offers several warm responses to the objections using a firm Scriptural basis as material for handling those very issues. In the end, the author reminds the reader to let the Holy Spirit work and to not take objection if the person does not accept Christ.

In the closing sections of the book, Fay discusses some additional information to prepare the reader for furthering their evangelical life as well as encouraging them to “Go” in the closing. As the first item of note, Fay offers suggestions on how one should slowly open their faith to their non-believing friends while still keeping the relationships alive and hopefully to minister to them someday. Following that, the author provides a strong dose of guidance on how to reach the lost and a guide to constantly pray for God’s will to happen in the life of the evangelist and in the church before providing a 7 day scripture guide to praying for the lost. At this point, Fay finishes out his work cleanly with a modern take on the Great Commission and some no-nonsense guidelines for accomplishing that commission. In the back matter of his work, Fay provides an appendix covering the common sections of the program and shares his own testimony.

Evaluation

Despite the fact that a few areas of Bill Fay’s book are not quite as balanced as others, the overall premise offers a strong subject with well supported arguments. The work is part evangelist handbook, part apologetic thesis and part cleverly crafted spiritual anthology weaved into a seamless collection to both inform and entertain. Using his chaotic journey to Christ coupled with his smooth-talking businessman style Fay is able to make a topic many Christians find frightening and simplify it on common ground.

The first thing that many readers will notice about the book is the straightforward delivery style that Fay employs with rapid fire delivery that still manages to soften the impact of the fact he wishes for the reader to absorb and for the person the reader wishes to reach. The author has a stout command of the psychology of both the reader and the person being reached and accurately portrays both sides of the experience.

It is clear in his writing that Fay wanted to use his own experiences ministering to people and how much trouble he once gave people ministering to him as ‘worst case scenarios’ and he does so with great skill.

The ‘Share Jesus Questions’ are wonderful guidelines as they are formulated in a manner that makes them unobtrusive to the hearer and focuses on building a bridge not making a wall. Focusing on the ‘Hmm Principle’ (Fay and Shepherd 1999, 33) is another magnificent technique for avoiding most confrontation as it does not employ any kind of judgment however, one might want to consider their tone rather carefully or use “Mm hmm” instead as otherwise it might come across as showing disinterest from the one trying to evangelize. Despite this, Fay does not really offer any warnings about what one might need to do if “Hmmm” sparks any kind of discord with the questions other than his common arguments and responses.

Shifting gears into the ‘Share Jesus Scriptures’, Fay shows the truth of what he is attempting to do all along... show someone the scriptures. It is fantastic to see that Fay is clearly basing the questions asked and the steps he created on the Bible instead of some other self-devised means of evangelizing. The stereotypical evangelist in many secular movies is often depicted as a crazed man (sometimes a woman) who screams about repentance and forces religious tracts into the hands of anyone who will take them. This ‘blitzkrieg’ method for evangelism is what many non-believers expect to receive when someone says they wish to share the Gospel with them and the non-believers will likely be far more receptive in the manner offered by Fay. This fact is further ingrained in the discussion as the reader is reminded to have the non-believer simply read the scriptures and leaves the rest up to the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, Fay yet again seems to focus only on the positive reception he has received and offers little of the negative and seems to write in a style that makes the reader believe they will not receive any opposition.

However, if one does receive the aforementioned opposition, Fay has still included the common responses even though the book does not point to them as frequently here.

Beyond these things, the remainder of the book finishes solidly as a chapter is devoted each to what should happen in either the acceptance or rejection of Christ in a functional manner. It shows a great amount of heart as well as common sense that Bill Fay insists not to abandon the people that the reader has brought to Christ and focuses more on the 'whole' person instead of the 'event' of evangelizing. The information is collected as such that the reader can see themselves following through from start to finish and truly grow the Kingdom.

The only weakness that the reader might find in an evaluation of the material over facing rejection of Christ is that the answers offered by Fay are often in the form of 'canned answers' that may or may not be accurate in the situations a reader will encounter when they choose to share. To his credit, the author does express that the options offered are by no means a standard guide since faith is so individualized yet he continues to write as though the evangelist will find themselves in a utopian environment where if they follow enough of what he specifies, they will prevail in getting someone to accept Christ. Even so, if the evangelist applies their own common knowledge to the situation and couples it with Fay's guidelines, the information will provide a strong enough framework to succeed in reaching others with the Gospel. Simply, if the reader does not consider this work a fool-proof standard for evangelism but rather a foundationally sound guide, it will serve well.

In conclusion, Bill Fay's *Sharing Jesus without Fear* is a wonderful resource to guide both new evangelists and seasoned veterans with a four step program to take the fear out of sharing their faith with the world in a way that is simple and non-confrontational.

With proper prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, Fay's work will be a very useful guide to successfully reach the lost. It is only fitting that Fay concludes his work with the statement of 'Let's Go!' for when Jesus was about to make his ascent into heaven, one of the last things that he told his disciples was: "*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*" (Matthew 28:19, HCSB). Using the work of Fay, this concept seems much more attainable.