Why we are losing the most important battle. Sermon for Sunday, Nov 10, 2013 Acts

From fear to faith – last week on Spiritual Warfare

Today – Eve of Veterans Day – Let’s look at why we are losing the most important battle

By taking a 2013 perspective of the book of Acts

Billy Graham turned 95 this week - His desire

One Hope for America

My Hope America with Billy Graham is a nationwide effort to reach people across the United States with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Following a simple biblical model, My Hope America with Billy Graham combines the impact of [video programs](http://myhopewithbillygraham.org/programs/?) with the power of personal relationships. Christians across America will open their homes to share the Gospel message with friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors using one of several new evangelistic programs featuring life-changing testimonies & powerful messages from Billy Graham

Why living rooms? Why not the churches?

Some churches are not conducive to this kind of caring and sharing

Kierkagaard in "And I looked around and nobody was laughing" says this, "I went into church and sat on the velvet pew. I watched as the sun came shining through the stained glass windows. The minister dressed in a velvet robe opened the golden gilded Bible, marked it with a silk bookmark and said, "If any man will be my disciple, said Jesus, let him deny himself, take up his cross, sell what he has, give it to the poor, and follow me."

Some people are turned off by churches for various reasons (hypocrisy, jugmentalism)

Some people are intimidated because they don’t know what a church is like

Until they meet some people – in a setting more comfortable at first

Relationships

Believing God is the answer

Believing it is God’s will for us

Our connectedness and its implications (The rat story)

Once upon a time a rat looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. What food might it contain? He was aghast to discover that it was a rat trap. Retreating to the farmyard the rat proclaimed the warning; "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!"  
  
The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Rat, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."  
  
The rat turned to the pig and told him, "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!"  
  
"I am so very sorry Mr. Rat," sympathized the pig, "but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured that you are in my prayers."  
  
The rat turned to the cow. She said, "Like wow, Mr. Rat. A rat trap. I am in grave danger. Duh?"  
  
So the rat returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer’s rat trap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, like the sound of a rat trap catching its prey. The farmer’s wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer’s wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital.  
  
She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows that you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup’s main ingredient.  
  
His wife’s sickness continued so that friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them the farmer butchered the pig.  
  
The farmer’s wife did not get well. She died, and so many people came for her funeral that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.  
  
So the next time you hear that someone is facing a problem and think that it does not concern you, remember that when there is a rat trap in the house, the whole farmyard is at risk.

Opportunity (story illustration of soldier kissing beautiful girl and slapping officer)

A young soldier and his commanding officer got on a train together. The only available seats were across from an attractive young women who was traveling with her grandmother. As they engaged in pleasant conversation, the soldier and the young woman kept eyeing one another; the attraction was obviously mutual. Suddenly the train went into a tunnel and the car became pitch black.  
  
Immediately two sounds were heard: the “smack” of a kiss, and the “whack” of a slap across the face. The grandmother thought “I can’t believe he kissed my granddaughter, but I’m glad she gave him the slap he deserved.”   
  
The commanding officer thought, “I don’t blame the boy for kissing girl, but it’s a shame that she missed his face and hit me instead.”   
  
The young girl thought, “I’m glad he kissed me, but I wish my grandmother hadn’t slapped him for doing it.”  
  
And as the train broke into the sunlight, the soldier could not wipe the smile off his face. He had just seized the opportunity to kiss a pretty girl and slap his commanding officer and had gotten away with both!  
  
Now, that young soldier knew how seize the opportunity!

In the same way, we must take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way to fulfill our purpose in life.  
  
Unfortunately, many times we get so caught up in the details of every day to day living that we just don’t have the time to seize the moment!   
  
We’ve got deadlines and commitments, problems, and priorities, distractions and obstacles, and though we really want more fulfillment from each day, it just doesn’t seem to be within our grasp.

The opportunity we have at Acts

Small – wonderful people. Some diversity.

Holidays – opportunity

Give

Love

Real Cost

It’s about living “in the moment” or “to the full” – not letting life just pass you by – or not focusing on the wrong things so that you miss the most important

And, he learned the most important were about people – relationships

The cost of real relationships

But today we are losing in this area – for we think the cost of real relationships is too high

We might not consciously say it, but our actions prove it

The truth is, it’s hard to manage real relationships – so we usually end up focusing on a few – most often immediate family, and we don’t always end up doing a great job there either – because we tend to take them for granted.

But if life is about relationships, and it is, then how can we learn to focus on them, to nurture them, even expand them expand our circle of relationships in our world?

(If we can’t manage the few family relationships how can we add to them?)

Acts 1:8

Mission – Reach up, Build up, Reach out

**Acts 1:1-3 (NIV)**   
1  In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach   
2  until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

3  After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

**Acts 1:4-8 (NIV)**   
4  On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.   
5  For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6  So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"   
7  He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8  But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

**Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)**   
42  They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43  Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

44  All the believers were together and had everything in common.   
45  Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

46  Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

47  praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Acts 8:1-8 (NIV)**   
1  And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

2  Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.   
3  But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

4  Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

5  Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.   
6  When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.   
7  With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.   
8  So there was great joy in that city.

J—Jesus First

O—Others second

Y—Yourself third

Relationship busters

Selfishness

Focused on your own pleasures – the backfire effect. You end up lonely.

You end up not being happy and fulfilled

Next week a man, Luther Scell, will share his testimony about losing his son, and how God helped him, led him to heal and help others.